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I represent the first generation of "fast food" customers. I am not sure I really want to admit that or not! I remember when the first McDonalds went up literally around the corner from my house. It really did have those big golden arches and it looked like a fancy ice cream stand. You physically walked up to the window and ordered your food and then took it back to your car! What a concept! The hamburgers were little and so was the serving size of fries. Coke wasn't diet at the time and you could get a whole meal for probably under a dollar. I am starting to sound like my parents and their stories of how far they used to walk to school!! I guess that age and memories do that to you.

I also remember that it was the big hangout for kids to go after the high school football games and my dad would be furious when he found wrappers and trash from McDonalds on our pristine yard the next morning. He actually forbid me to go to McDonalds as he said that my Mom's hamburgers were much better than those cheap ones and that why would I ever want to trade her cooking for theirs? Good question!

Times have changed over these past 30 plus years and trading home cooking for convenience meals has been more of the rule than the exception. I even find myself running out for lunch and my office is in my home! I guess I don't cook like Mom! It isn't the cooking; it is actually a fresh tossed salad I crave. I just don't want to take the time to cut up the ingredients and wash the lettuce and grate the cheese and on and on. It is just so much easier to drive to a fast-food restaurant and zip through the drive-thru and bring home that fresh, crisp salad to my office.

My favorite salad is the new Chicken BLT salad at Wendy's! It is excellent! But a funny thing happened the other day as I was going through the drive-thru. I ordered my salad, paid for it and picked it up at the last window. Simple enough! However, as she handed it to me out of the window, the employee said, "Have a great day, see you tomorrow"!

See you tomorrow? Wait a minute. This is the first time I had been to Wendy's in weeks! I thought to myself, well maybe I looked like someone who comes here everyday on their lunch hour. Then I thought, no, maybe she thought she recognized my voice. No, that wasn't it either.

Wait a minute; I thought to myself, I AM NOT COMING HERE TOMORROW! Or am I?

The power of a positive suggestion was planted in my head! The skeptic part of me said, try them

again next week and see if you get the same comment. You guessed it. The past three times I have gone through the drive-thru the last person says, "See you tomorrow"! I haven't gone into the restaurant to hear if they say that inside after you order. Maybe they wouldn't want to see my puzzled face like the one that I had in my car the first time I heard those words.

What a fabulous customer service idea! The length of time spent in the drive-thru is usually just minutes. So much is automated that the employees have very little time for interaction. Their final goal is to plant the seed in the customers' mind that; we want you to come back soon!

This experience sparked my interest to go to their website and see if I could find something there about this new training technique. I didn't find that, but I did find myself studying the life and business success's of Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's, who passed away in 2002. I found myself on the Dave Thomas home page where I read the following: "Dave's Legacy lives on in his words, his values and in his actions." I clicked on the word "values" and found that Dave had 5 Values he lived by. There is a powerful message in each one of them.

VALUE 1 -Quality is Our Recipe- "When he talked about quality it wasn't just the food served at Wendy's; it was also the way he treated people and the way he lived his life". The employees at Wendy's were treating me like family, someone they would like to see, tomorrow!

VALUE 2 - Do the Right Thing-"He was a man of his word and he believed you earn your reputation by the things you do every day. He considered personal integrity the most important value one can have." He built trust within his company, his employees and the general public who bought his food, everyday.

VALUE 3- Treat People with Respect- "He lived by the Golden Rule: Treat others the way you would like to be treated. He simplified this by saying, Just Be Nice. When he met you he looked you in the eye and remembered your name. He thought that was the greatest sign of respect". How much could each of us learn from those simple, yet profound points?

VALUE 4- Profit is Not a Dirty Word - "Profit in business means growth and opportunities. It also means being able to share your success with your team and your community." How do you measure your bottom line?

VALUE 5 - Give Something Back- "Dave believed that everyone has a responsibility to give back- to help those who can't help themselves. It means giving of your time and your special skills." This may have been his biggest secret to his success.

Dave Thomas is a person I would have wanted to meet. I think I probably would have wanted to give him a hug, you know, like family. As he said, "From the very beginning, I never thought of myself as anybody special. And whatever I've accomplished through my life, when I look in the mirror, I still see myself as a hamburger cook." (From Daves Way, 1991).

I think he was wrong. He was very special! Wouldn't the world be a better place if we lived by Dave's value system? Customer service, Dave's way, is really in your head, and by the way, where do you think I am going for lunch today?

To learn more about Dave Thomas and Wendy's go to www.wendys.com

Anne M. Obarski is the "Eye" on Performance. She is an author, professional speaker, retail consultant and Executive Director of Merchandise Concepts. Anne works with companies who are people, performance, profit focused and she helps leaders see their businesses through their

customers' eyes. Anne's mystery shoppers have secretly "snooped" over 2000 stores searching for excellence in customer service.

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