

Blasé Attitude

By Bob Osgoodby

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Today, we see all sorts of things going on all around us. The papers and TV seldom report the good things that happen however, as it seems that sensationalism is what sells. A horrible accident, murder or robbery are given top coverage. In most of the events that occur, this is a fact of life. If it doesn't affect us directly, we may have a blasé attitude about it.

A tragedy down the street would certainly affect some people very much. But to the majority of onlookers who were not personally involved, it may be of no concern whatsoever.

Now how does this affect us in our business dealings? If we hurt someone by our actions, you might think that this would be the case, and the majority of the people wouldn't care. But - there is another old saying that may be even more relevant. "For every satisfied customer you may get another, but for every dissatisfied customer you will lose ten."

If you are in business today, you must be aware of the satisfaction level of your customers. In many businesses, customer referral is one of the prime driving forces. While we all know it's impossible to please everyone, you should make your best effort.

Sometimes, you have to realize however, that no matter what you do, the customer will not be satisfied. It may reach the point where it simply isn't worth your time to continue. Years ago, a person, who I respected very much, told me that if you can't solve the problem to the customers satisfaction, and it appears that you won't be able to, immediately offer them a refund. This does two things, and both are good.

First, by being up front with them and offering a refund, they may calm down and be willing to work with you towards a mutually satisfactory solution. Secondly, if you can't reach a solution, at least they will recognize that you are fair, and won't "bad mouth" you to everyone they meet.

The absolute worst thing you can do, is make it so difficult for them to solve their problem, that they simply give up. Many of the internet Service Providers are shining examples of how not to treat customers. Sure they have support 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, but keep you on hold for an interminable period, and then may not have the expertise to solve your problem. They then refer your problem to "Level 2" support and back you go on hold. It actually seems that they don't care.

Some other companies you deal with have the same attitude, and forget that you are their customer. I once ordered a four line telephone from one of the larger office suppliers. They didn't have it in stock, and arranged to have it delivered directly from their warehouse - so far so good - they were trying to accommodate me.

The next day however, when it didn't arrive as promised, I called to find out what was happening. The person I talked with said it was delivered. When I explained that there was a similar address in the same town where it was probably delivered, she actually made me feel like a thief. In a huff, she finally said she would reship it, and hung up before I could respond. Now I'm not a "hard case", and can only assume she treats everyone that way. Not only didn't I accept it when it did arrive, but will never shop there again.

Which brings us to the final thought on this problem. People like to deal with people. Most business pundits will advise you to sell yourself first and your product second. If someone does have a problem, be polite and understanding. If you gain a level of trust with your customers, they will be more inclined to work with you. If you are blasé' or indifferent, you may have just lost a customer.

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