

MAKE QUANTUM LEAPS IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

By: Lou Principe

Are you comfortable with changing your company's culture to make quantum leaps in customer service and sales? Are you still doing things the old fashioned way? Change is important, but only when there is something better available! It takes EFFORT and COMMITMENT to find that "something better"!

There are two steps every company should realize they need to make to increase profits and productivity. They are (1) to implement performance standards for customer service representatives, salespeople, supervisors and management, and (2) to teach communication and psychology as they pertain to getting someone to say "yes"! These "soft skills" are often the hardest to learn.

They are the Secrets of Success, necessary to increase sales and customer service productivity. The results of implementing this type of program in your company will immediately show up in additional customer satisfaction, more sales, fewer complaints, less dollars spent on customer and employee retention, improvement in team attitude and an immediate increase in company profits.

"You know me, I'm a nice person. When I receive bad service, I don't complain. I never criticize. I don't make a scene-I just go elsewhere." Recent research shows 25% of the customers are dissatisfied enough with the service they receive that they will stop doing business with you at any time. However, only 4% complain. People don't complain because first, they feel nothing will be done. Second, they are busy. Third, they don't want to be perceived as a whiner or griper. "I'm one of those nice customers who doesn't come back." In other words, they would rather SWITCH than FIGHT.

Twenty complaints equate to 500 dissatisfied customers, using a multiplier of 4...96% of your dissatisfied customers tell ten other people on average of their bad experience.

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Therefore, 480 complaining customers tell 4,800 people about their bad experience with you. "Did you know that before we buy, 61% of

us will validate the purchase decision with a friend? Of the 4,800 that know of the bad experience, 2,928 will be asked their opinion of your company. You see, a nice customer like me, multiplied by others like me, can bring a business to its knees. There are plenty of us. When we get pushed far enough, we go to one of your competitors. We did it to now defunct Eastern. Eastern boasted: 'We fly more passengers than any other air-line.' They forgot to give us service."

Successful companies recognize their sales teams, i.e., service personnel, delivery drivers, customer service, billing and anyone else who comes in contact with the customers, as salespeople. We need to sell the customer on ourselves, our company, our products and services. The whole team must be recognized as supporting all of your company assets. They are the ones coming in contact with the money coming into your corporation and their positive, proactive interaction with the customer can set you apart from the competition. Employees must be trained as professionals.

A trained employee will increase personal productivity 600%, according to a recent study. Normally, the training budget is the last item on the P & L statement, and it's the first item to go to cut costs. We must look at training, not as an expense, but as an investment. For every dollar invested, your return should average \$100 in increased productivity and sales.

Most companies have a superb training staff, but occasionally they need an objective set of eyes to see the scotomas, the blind spots, areas we don't recognize anymore.

Foster Cathcart, former vice president of Dupont Corporation, tells of the time he was in the Dupont Plant in Mexico. He asked the plant manager what he thought of a corner of the plant. The manager told him it looked o.k. to him. Foster replied, "Please clean it up, before it looks o.k. to me too." You need to have an outside objective set of eyes to evaluate what you

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can do to improve the company's efficiency and effectiveness.

There needs to be installed, measurable conformance requirements. You can't manage it if you can't measure it.

The late Admiral Grace Harper, principal architect of the popular COBOL

business language, once said, "Some managers are like safe ships in port. However, battleships were made to fight!" In other words, you have to venture out of your comfort zone if you are truly going to lead your organization. If you stay safely in port, the rest of the competition will steam past you without even having to compete for their success!

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