

# How To Right A Customer Service Wrong!!

By Deborah S Hildebrand

While many would argue that the old adage about the customer always being right is no longer true, in our world of IMing, Twitter and the blogosphere, it really doesn't matter: whether organizations like it or not, their business – good or bad – can be on the street in minutes. That's why it's important to be prepared to respond quickly.

## Prepare Employees in Advance

Many years ago, the president of my country lectured about the importance of customer service. He spoke about how a chain of high-end hotels had developed a great reputation, not merely because of their luxurious ambiance, but also because of their excellent customer service.

What made the Four Seasons so successful, he said, was the employees were empowered to think for themselves when it came to making a visitor's stay rewarding. In fact, they had discretionary approval of up to a certain monetary limit. So, if they needed to upgrade a room or offer an extra service, it was in their power to do so. Whether they continue this tradition today, I do not know. Still, it's easy to see how customers benefit because the employees were treated right.

*If you want to right a customer service wrong, the best place to start is at the beginning. More specifically, train employees to recognize outstanding customer service and empower them to solve problems that arise. So, how do you do this?*



## Employ Friendly People

First and foremost, you need to employ people who are able to remain friendly even when the customer's not. Hire "people-persons" who enjoy solving problems and flourish in fast-paced, stressful environments. Next, you need to train your customer-service employees to be helpful and answer questions honestly – even if that means conducting research and calling the customer back.

Finally, and most importantly, customer-service employees need to listen to their clients' needs and complaints. If customers are angry, they need to realize that it's not about them: it's about the business. In fact, one of the most difficult parts of working in customer service is not taking complaints personally.

## Save the Customers Worth Saving

Some people will tell you that all customers are worth retaining. However, not everyone sees it this way. Here's a story from Alexander Kjefulf, business consultant, motivational speaker and author of "Happy Hour is 9 to 5".

"One woman who frequently flew on Southwest (Airlines) was constantly disappointed with every aspect of the company's operation. In fact, she became known as the "Pen Pal" because after every flight, she wrote in with a complaint. She didn't like the fact that the company did not assign seats; she did not like the absence of a first-class section; she did not like not having a meal in flight; she did not like Southwest's boarding procedures; she did not like the flight attendants' sporty uniforms and the casual atmosphere.

Her last letter, reciting a litany of complaints momentarily stumped Southwest's customer-relations people. They bumped it up to Herb's (Kelleher, CEO of Southwest) desk, with a note: 'This one's yours'

In 60 seconds, Kelleher wrote back and said, "Dear Mrs Crabapple, We will miss you. Love Herb"

*Basically, you have to recognize whether or not the customer's worth saving. If they're obnoxious, costing you more money than they generate, and making unreasonable demands, then it may be beneficial to let them go; otherwise, you're likely to breed resentment among your employees. And sometimes, that the only way to truly right a customer service wrong.*