

Good customer relations are good for business

By Bruce A. Love

This week I was reminded of the value of providing good customer service. I was out of town when my engine light came on. As a degreed electronics engineer, I quickly determined my car had a problem (my ability to diagnose automobile problems is limited to reading dummy lights). I was due for an oil change and thought maybe this was the problem. I drove to the local "Grease Monkey" hoping that maybe they could help me. They did! Not only did Grease Monkey change my oil and filter, and check about 20 other things, but they also read my car's computer to determine the problem (gratis, thank you), and gave me the inspiration for this week's column! All this in less than 15 minutes and under \$35!

This was not my first visit to the Doylestown Grease Monkey. In fact, one more oil change, and I get the next one free! The great service I received this week was not a fluke. I have been treated like a VIP every time I have been there (and they don't even know that I write for the Altoona Mirror)!

Upon entering the Grease Monkey lot, customers are greeted by one of the competent and cheerful customer service technicians. Stephanie logged me in, arranged valet service to bay number 2, and escorted me to the comfortable waiting room. I told her my plight, and she assured me their pit crew would check everything out.

After a few minutes, the assistant manager sat down with me to give the prognosis. I was prepared for bad news, but Sarah told me my "problem" appeared to be a leaky seal on the gas cap – nothing serious! Ten minutes later, I drove out of the lot, very satisfied with the service I received, and looking forward to my next visit in three thousand miles!

My experience at the Grease Monkey prompted me to call the storeowner to find out about the business. I knew the employees MUST receive extensive training to consistently provide great customer service. Tony Nakonetschny confirmed that some training was prescribed by the franchise, but that he added several of his own procedures. Among them were (1) thank the customer 3 times during their visit, and (2) don't give a sales pitch (as suggested by the franchise) while thanking them. Good service and sincere gratitude are better than any sales pitch!

I was disappointed to learn that there are no Grease Monkeys in Blair County (though they are a National franchise if anyone is interested). However, since moving to Blair County, I have discovered many local companies that go the extra mile for their customers. Here are three examples:

- In the dead of winter (of course) the circulation pump motor on our furnace died. My house is about 70 years old, and had a motor and pump that looked like original equipment (big and old). A replacement could not be found in any of the local stores, though all volunteered to order one for me. Unfortunately, I was not in a position to be that patient. Contractor G. W. Sipes (of New Enterprise) overheard my ordeal and suggested I follow him back to his shop - he had a used one I could have. This type of service can win customers for life!
- On Christmas Eve, my son got a flat and picked up a new tire. Unfortunately, he did not have Wal-Mart put it on. I never realized the effort it takes to put a tire on a rim and inflate it until that day! With most stores closing for the holiday, and my son with plans to leave town, the situation seemed nearly hopeless. When I walked into Roaring Spring Auto Supply, the attendant volunteered to take care of it for me. This was clearly not part of his job description, but very appreciated, and not forgotten!
- My wife describes her doctor, Dr. Jennifer Murnyack-Garner (of Blair Medical Associates) as having patient skills that would rival the care and service I received at Grease Monkey. That is quite a claim for a doctor's office (but I have good reason to concur with that assessment - thank you Dr. Jennifer!).

There is one simple lesson we can learn from each of these businesses: Go the extra mile with every customer. You never know when one might write a column in a local newspaper announcing to the world how they were treated. Even if they do not use the power of the media, customers have a way of spreading the news. News of good service spreads quickly, but not as quickly as stories of bad customer service! Just remember, good customer relations are good for business!

Love Consulting
600 Oakmont Place
Roaring Spring, PA 16673
814-224-2651

articles@loveconsulting.com

© 2005 Love Consulting