



Can You Explain This to Me? I Thought They Wanted My Business

I've become increasingly frustrated with the level of customer service that surrounds me today. You would think that in a down economy companies would be doing everything possible can to win the loyalty of their customers... think again.

It's amazing how many organizations believe the best way to grow the bottom line is by putting a choke hold on expenses. Calling this short term thinking would be generous. There's little focus on keeping customers satisfied (growing top line revenues) because everyone is busy implementing half baked ideas on cutting costs (which ultimately drives customers away).

Who hasn't wrestled with automated customer service systems that really aren't automated? You enter your account number to ensure "proper service" but then you're asked for the same information three more times before you're able to conduct business. These companies have decided that their time is more valuable than their customers'. This is nothing more than a bad decision that leaves crippled revenues in its wake.

I'm also trying to figure out what happened to the concept of supporting what you sell. Last week I encountered some challenges with an expensive piece of graphics design software. Thankfully I had paid a premium for live technical support when I purchased the product. This seemed to be a good financial decision given how critical this software was to my office operations.

After being routed to five different tech support numbers, I finally found myself talking to someone half way around the globe who was A) not fluent in English, B) not very experienced and C) not helpful. What are the odds that I'll ever spend another dime with this company? And if you look at their latest financials – they're tanking more than their industry average. Go figure!

So what can you do to ensure that this epidemic doesn't affect you?

#1. Be better at marriage than you are at dating

Everyone shows up with their "A game" whether they're courting romance or new business. But too often sales people lose their enthusiasm and passion for the relationship once the deal is signed. It happens all the time.

Does your realtor stay in touch with you throughout the year (or do you just get a holiday card)? What about the salesperson you worked with on your last vehicle purchase? Ever hear from them again?

Houses and cars are two of the biggest personal purchases most of us make. How much effort would it take to for these sales people to stay in touch and drop a simple note in the mail from time to time? Not much! Would you be more likely to do business with them again if they did? You bet!

How good are you at staying in touch after the deal is signed?

#2. Communicate, communicate, communicate

Even with all of today's modern technology, it's become almost impossible to talk live with someone who cares. And your job as an account manager is to ensure that your customers know you care.

Sure there's a risk involved when you tell customers that you're committed to their success. Many times you'll walk away from those conversations with a punch list of things that need to get done. And that means more work.

But if you don't step up and ensure that your customer is being cared for, who will? Are you willing to risk repeat business by having your customers rely on your automated phone support system, your website, or your call center far, far away in a distant land? I wouldn't!

#3. Do what you say you are going to do, or say nothing at all

Make sure that you can cover every check that your mouth writes. Don't make empty promises, don't play loose with the facts and please have the courage to say you don't know the answer (versus just making something up).

When your voicemail greeting says you're away from the desk or just on the other line, I assume I'll hear back from you shortly. After all, you just told me that you're away from your desk or on the other line. But what if you're traveling, or at a meeting or tied up at a conference? I'm probably not going hear back from you "shortly" – so why wouldn't you update your voice mail greeting every day? I realize it takes about 30 seconds, but I believe that is time well spent.

Customers are experiencing uncertainty and fear as they look into the future. Their organizations are cutting headcount and budgets are being slashed. This is the worst possible moment for them to feel like you have abandoned them.

Step up, show up, follow up and you'll separate yourself from the herds that have stuck their heads in the sand waiting for this economy to blow over. Taking care of customers today means taking care of your business, and that's a great reputation to have.

Speaking of Sales is about finding, winning and keeping customers for life. If that's part of your job, then you won't want to miss the next issue.

Until then,

Tim

Tim Wackel
tim@timwackel.com
214.369.7722

Tim Wackel is hired by sales executives who want their teams to be more successful at blowing the number away. Tim's "no excuses" programs are insightful, engaging and focused on providing real world strategies that salespeople can (and will!) implement right away. Sales teams from BMC Software, Cisco, Fossil, Hewlett Packard, Allstate, Thomson Reuters, Raytheon, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Catalina Marketing, Philips Medical Systems, Red Hat and TXU Energy count on Tim to help them create more success in business and in life.