

## The Customer in Customer Service

By Shawna Schuh, CSP



I had a little fright this afternoon. I opened my wallet and that little slit of leather that holds my Visa card was pressing leather on leather. What could have happened to my card? I was beside myself with—worry as my mind imagined someone at the mall brandishing my card about, charging an entire furniture set to the already bulging balance. Had someone stolen it? When could they have done that, it's been with me since the last time I used it. When was the last time I used it? Think Shawna, think. Use your head for something other than banging it on the wall in frustration.

Last night I bought something at the deli and I remember being mad at myself for forgetting my checkbook and having to charge it. Okay, I can call and see if they have it and, if so, my worries are moot. Looking up the number, getting the wrong department twice, and then having a voice that sounded like it hadn't quite made it to puberty was part of an ordeal totally of my own doing. I thought, "You deserve for this to be a hassle since you were stupid enough to lose the Visa in the first place, which is exactly what you deserve for using it for food anyway. You know better Shawna and now God is teaching you a lesson."

This negative thinking took place while I waited for Mr. Not-out-of-puberty yet to holler over to someone, "Hey, anybody seen a Visa card lying around?" My heart was dropping since I would hope that my precious piece of plastic wasn't just lying around anywhere. Mr. puberty came back on the line and said that no one had seen it.

His voice sounded resigned; he had made an attempt and his part was over, end of service, if you could call that feeble holler of his service.

I attempted to try again. "I'm certain that I used it last night at your store. The woman who helped me was blonde; she works two jobs and is very tired. Do you know who I mean? Is she there?" His voice was hesitant, "Ah, no. Just a minute." I heard him walk over carrying the phone and me with him. "Listen, there's a woman on the line and she says she left her Visa here, anybody seen it?" I was at least getting some help, though it was begrudgingly.

He came back to me and said, "I'm sorry lady." He had given up. His voice told me that this was the end; he'd asked and that was all he knew to do. I knew in my heart that this kid wasn't a bad guy. I knew he was just a little on the unskilled side, so I switched into "my life is good and it's all right" mode. I wasn't getting good customer service, but I decided to be a good customer and see if I could improve my service that way. "What happens to Visa cards that people leave?" I asked him nicely.

"Just a sec." he replied. I heard him ask someone standing there, "Hey, what do we do with Visa cards that people leave?" I was at least getting somewhere and he was learning something besides. The reply was something to the affect of maybe they go to customer service. Aw, customer service, what a concept!

"I think they take them to customer service," he was back on the line and his voice sounded deeper, "I'll run over there and ask." "Would you? That would be great! I'll hold," I encouraged. "It's okay; I'll just take the phone with me." He suddenly sounded excited. I didn't know if it was because he had the chance to help me or because he could get out from behind the deli counter, but I didn't care. We walked over to the customer service desk, him in his scuffed up Reeboks® I imagined, and me on the phone. "Were any Visa cards left here last night?" he asked whoever was standing there. "What's the name?" came the reply. He came back on the line and his entire demeanor

had changed. "What's the name on your card?" he asked with authority. "Shawna Schuh," I replied. "Shawna Schuh," he said to the woman who had asked. "Here it is," I heard her exclaim. I could hear the smile in his voice when he said, "We found it!" "I'm so happy," I enthused over the phone. "You were so great to go out of your way for me, thank you so very much! Can I just have you hold it until I can get back there in a day or two?" "No problem!" He was totally in command now, "Just ask for it at the customer service counter." "Thank you again!" I said with feeling. My whole body was starting to relax as this mystery was solved. "It was my pleasure!" The boy suddenly sounded like a young man, one that had been confronted with a challenge. One he didn't really want to handle but one which when he did, it gave him additional knowledge and confidence.

Suddenly I was glad I'd left my Visa card there. I had just witnessed the joy and excitement that one feels when they have really provided service to someone else. I hope the experience is one he will repeat and become an expert at. There's really nothing better in life than helping someone else. It puts smiles on both people's faces and makes the world a better place. The next time someone is reluctant to help you be a good customer and give them the chance to help you. Walk them through the situation without giving up or letting them give up. You may just help someone become a better person and you will have become one as well, all by putting a good customer into customer service.

### ***Conquer Apathy and Erase Rudeness***

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