

## People Are Priceless

By Shawna Schuh, CSP



We are living in the most prosperous time in history. Every day we hear more and more about how well Americans are doing. People are spending more, investing more and, hopefully, saving more. I am filled with optimism as I write these words and share this fact with you. At the same time, we are experiencing the rudest behavior in history. Now I don't have statistics on this, and I can only go by what my clients and audiences tell me, but I am personally hearing and experiencing the rudest behavior I've ever encountered from almost all sectors. It seems that rudeness rules!

I can also turn to local news media which is reporting more and more on the phenomenon that we have left customer service by the side of the cyber highway. In an article in Business Week titled "Why Service Stinks", Diane Brady makes a pretty persuasive case about why we have become an automated society and why more and more companies are treating us not as individuals, but as profit and loss centers. According to this article, the companies of the future, as well as today, have a customer profiles on us to determine if we are buyers or complainers and what our business is really worth to them. Then they treat us accordingly, not simply because we are human beings and deserve a little common courtesy and good service. They don't even bother to thank us for our business anymore unless we've spent over the predetermined profit limit, or opened up a charge account with them!

I believe all of this is scary and misses a very big point of the power of purchasing; it doesn't take into account what we will do in the future.

This simple fact gives a huge advantage to anyone willing to go the extra mile in regards to service. Let me say that again. This economy is providing a huge advantage to any service or business that is willing to go the extra mile.

When service and courtesy were commonplace and people treated each other with courtesy and respect, businesses were glad for any customers, not just the one's who spent the most, and it was more difficult to make it big. That's why the discounters became so popular. People were willing to give up service for better prices. We began to bag our own groceries and do our own banking. This isn't necessarily a bad thing and has made life more convenient in many ways. The challenge is that when we really do need some answers from a living, breathing person, there aren't any to be found, and even if there are found, they won't answer our calls unless we are in the upper percentage of spenders. This is where the advantage comes in.

If we are the type of business that can actually answer the phone with a "live" person, answer questions and make a customer feel valued, why would a customer go anywhere else? They wouldn't, of course and, more importantly, they may spend more than their profile suggested since we've hit something no statistic ever has...we've touched their hearts and minds.

I would never underestimate the power of a person. We are the most unique, unusual and fabulous creations God ever made, and if you want to excel in this prosperous economy then do what the big guns aren't doing and treat your customers with courtesy and respect.

When those low spenders become big spenders they will be twice as likely to buy from someone who has treated

them well over the big guns who treated them like a statistic.

It only stands to reason that when money becomes no challenge, the challenge is not how much to spend, but where to spend it. Would we really go back to a company who had no regard for us before we became successful?

I'm reminded of a friend who was just starting her own business and was treated very poorly by an office supply company. There was a challenge with the fact that her account didn't have her company name on it yet. (She was using temporary bank checks to buy her office furniture). To this day, even though she is highly successful, she will not step foot in that office supply store again. I would venture to say that she now can spend thousands of dollars for whatever she wants and that money will never go to the company who considered her small potatoes in the past. She will never forget the embarrassment and hurt feelings that she experienced.

So heed this advice and polish up your relationships with your customers.

Never behave towards people from the viewpoint of what they have or can spend. Always treat people by what they will and could spend and you will have a huge advantage over those that use technology to determine a person's worth. People are priceless. Treat them that way and you will always be successful.

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