

Customer Service is Now Customer Care

This article explains how customer service has changed into customer care. The successful restaurants always knew this.

As I waited for an answer to my VCR inquiry from a stereo company, the recording stated a customer care representative would be available shortly. At that moment, I realized it's finally catching on everywhere. With aging baby boomers, world events and additional pressures today; it is customer care that has evolved in our economy. We have moved from a manufacturing economy to a service economy and are currently leaning towards a service care economy. As we live in a high tech-high button touch environment, many personal contacts have been decreased making each customer interaction more important than ever to corporate imagery. For example, if you call for computer tech support, the representative often makes it a point to address you by first name. If it's the bank credit card company, they may ask How are you doing today? This makes the customer feel less like a number and more like a human being.

The successful restaurateurs always took service one step further towards care because they understood restaurant customer service literally involves the immediate health of the patron-- more so than any other industry (except for healthcare industry itself). A recent survey asked diners why they went out to eat and the main response was to feel good. (After all, the word restaurant has French origins meaning to restore). As a waiter for many years, I felt my job was to restore humanity, especially to diners arriving from a stressed-out day.

In my past dining room work experiences, I remember certain actions lifting service to this higher level of care. One time a customer requested margarine that wasn't available in the restaurant. The owner walked across the street to the grocery purchased the margarine and brought it tableside. The patron was delighted. There was a regular customer (diabetic) who always got immediate attention with some kind of bread or crackers to keep from feeling faint before her food arrived. If there was a baby present at a table, our staff ensured their food would come out as soon as possible to pacify. These kinds of actions create a lasting positive image for any company or establishment. The owner cared about his guests and it permeated thru the dining room and staff -- even after he left to open other restaurants for the company.

Customer Service involves major 3 points:

- 1) Care and Concern for the Customer
- 2) Spontaneity and Flexibility of frontline workers which enhances the ability for on-the-spot problem-solving.
- 3) Recovery- making things right with the customer when the process has gone astray.

These 3 points should always be highlighted in any customer service training program. If they are kept in mind, then quality service will occur.