

Customers Are The Business! **Part One**



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These three articles are about how to create a strong effective business relationship with your customers – internal and external, fill your business pipelines, and be outstanding when the circumstances put your business in the dark side of the marketplace.

These ideas and information are not new. There are thousands of books were written and millions of words were spoken about this subject by people who I cannot light a candle compare to them. The problem is that all these ideas and information are common knowledge, but they are not common practice.

Regardless of the type, the size or the kind of a business, (selling newspapers or running the biggest corporation in the country), as an owner, manager, an executive, or an operative employee you have to provide an outstanding excellent service to your customers. Otherwise, you will be struggling to survive and will not stay long in the business.

The product or service that your company provide, every employee in the organization, the fund that you have invested, and the time your organization spend, are focusing in one objective; creating satisfied customers.

The purpose of any business is to create customers, not to make money; otherwise, all the non-profit organizations would not exist. Without customers there will be no business, no profit, and no organization would need to employ any one and even to exist.

Sam M. Walton, the owner and the CEO of Wal-Mart said, "Literally everything we do, every concept perceived, every technology developed and associate employed, is directed with this one objective clearly in mind; pleasing the customer".

Customers are the business. They are the key holders of whether or not the business would survive. They are who pay the organization's bills, loans and every employee's salary. They can put the organization in a bad shape easily by spending their money with the organization's competitors.

When I was delivering a seminar on Personal Development in one of the organizations, one of the participants was late for about thirty minutes. When he entered the class, he apologized and gave the reason for being late as, "A customer disturbance"!

I asked him about the reason that he was employed. He told me that he was employed as a security guard. I then asked him, why? He answered me with a smile ' "To take care of people and things". I explained to him, and he got the message, that he was employed to serve and protect the customers – internal and external; in fact, serving customers is the reason of his and everyone else's existence in that organization.

In this regard, Mahatma Gandhi put it short and in a nice comprehensible way. He said, "The customer is the most important visitor on our premises. He is not dependent on us; we are dependent on him. He is not an interruption in our work; He is the purpose of it. He is not an outsider in our business; he is part of it. We are not doing him a favor by serving; He is doing us a favor by giving us an opportunity to do so".

Whatever we call it; customer retention, customer service, service quality or customer relation, it should not be just a department or just a mission statement. It must be the entire organization's attitude and culture towards customers' service excellence.

Economists and business management philosophers define service as, "An act of help or assistance done by one person or a group that benefits another".

This kind of service is not enough to maintain loyal customers. Service should and must be "An act of help or assistance done by one person or a group of people that provides satisfaction", and that is the definition of excellent service.

No one pays for a product or service; everyone pays for the satisfaction that the product or the service brings. Therefore, if the service is not satisfying, and since the product and service are easily accessible, the business will never have a product or price advantage again. What will last in the customers mind is the satisfying customer service attitude that cannot be easily duplicated.

Customers are people, who are free to choose where, when, how, why and from whom to buy. They also appreciate and value companies and people who provide good service and treat them the way they want to be treated. Therefore, customers will deal, buy and do business with companies that provide excellent service.

To a large degree, excellent customers' service will help the organization to continue to succeed and increase its profit. Moreover, it will participate in creating a higher job satisfaction, improving the employees feeling of self-worth, increasing the organization's morale, and making a motivational work environment.

In order to achieve excellent customer service, the first thing is that the entire organization must understand that to give excellent service is not optional; it is a must. The entire organization – from the CEO down - must be directed, aiming and focusing on creating customer-centered attitude and culture.

The entire organization has to focus and be committed to its internal and external customers' service excellence by following a process that requires effort and action in many areas and functions, focusing on only one or two areas will not work.

Organizations must focus first on creating internal customers' service excellence. The organization's internal customers are the people who work for the organization and rely on it for their pay, the information necessary to perform their jobs, and their skills development. They need the same care that the organization gives for the external customers. Otherwise, there will never be satisfied loyal external customers.

Peter Ferdinand Drucker, the father of business management said, "Managing people implies consideration of the human being as a resource, as something having peculiar psychological properties, abilities, and limitations that require the same amount of engineering attention as any other resource".

Internal customers require teaching, training, participation, encouragement, involvement, satisfaction, incentives and rewards, to be developed and to be working in a motivational working environment.

Fulfilling these requirements will increase the employees' knowledge and skills, improve their sense of ownership, multiply their motivational and morale levels, and provide them with internal drives to make the extra effort to achieve the organization's and the external customers' service excellence.

When being asked about his "secret to success", Herb Kelleher, the CEO of South West Airlines, said, "You have to treat your employees like customers".

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