

Are you Taking Your Customers for Granted?

By Regina Clark, CSP

Last week, after seventeen years of getting my hair cut at the same place, I decided to try a new hair salon and a new hairdresser. This was a big change and I was pleasantly surprised! The new hairdresser was pleasant, attentive and made some valuable suggestions. The new hair salon also had a more pleasant environment than the hair salon that I was used to. It was a difficult decision to change hairdressers after seventeen years. I truly liked my hairdresser; we shared quite a bit during the past seventeen years. I watched her kids grow up and she has watched mine grow up. But for the past year, I haven't been thrilled with the level of service that I was receiving when I went to get my hair cut and colored. I was comfortable there so I kept going back.

As a matter of fact, I was so comfortable there that I wasn't even taking into account the money that I was paying for mediocre service. I'm one of those customers that get my hair cut every 4-6 weeks. On average, a cut & color costs \$65.00 and I go approximately nine times a year. That's approximately \$585.00 plus tips every year. After seventeen years, that's more than \$10,000.00. If I added haircuts for my three children, manicures, and waxing the dollar amount would be much higher. My final decision to move on was made one day after I had my nails done. I was charged \$24.00 to get my nails filled. I handed the nail technician \$30.00. She placed the \$30.00 in her drawer and assumed that she was receiving a \$6.00 tip (a 20% tip would be \$4.80). I guess I could have given her a \$6.00 tip but I wasn't planning on it. In the past, she had always asked, "do you want change?" This time she just assumed that she was entitled to a \$6.00 tip. It's not the money that bothered me, it's the assumption.

If you have a customer that is worth over \$10,000.00 in revenue is she worth keeping?

During the seventeen year history with my hairdresser, I can't remember even one time when I received a freebie. Not a free cup of coffee, not a free eyebrow wax, not a free bottle of shampoo, not a free haircut for my little girl, nothing! What would it cost to say to me after seventeen years of being a loyal customer, "this one's on us." Do you have any idea how good that would make me feel? I would be thrilled!

One day, just out of curiosity, I asked the owner of the hair salon who her top customers were. She didn't know. Don't you want to know who your top customers are and isn't it worth a few bucks to keep them? It's a lot easier to keep your current customers than it is to find new ones. This particular hair salon is busy, so busy that they are taking their customers for granted. Taking your customers for granted is not a practice that I would recommend.

Left Brain Leverage

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Keep your Customers Coming Back

Plenty of business owners and employees are focused on keeping their customers happy and going the extra mile for their customers.

Last week, I stopped at Johnny D's diner in Newburgh, NY for breakfast. I think I was there once before many, many years ago. On the way out, my husband ordered a cup of coffee to go. When he went to pay for the coffee, the waitress refused his money and said, "It's on us, have a nice day." We will definitely return to Johnny D's.

A few weeks ago at the farmers market in Goshen, NY one of the vendors was cooking hamburgers and hot dogs and giving them out for FREE as a way to say thank you to his customers. His timing was great; he was doing this during lunch. On a weekly basis, he hands out free samples of soup, bread, and other goodies. I wish I could remember his name; he's the crab cake guy. I know that I will continue to buy crab cakes and other goodies from him for a long time!

More than once, Steve (the owner and chef at Catherine's in Goshen, NY) has treated us to dessert. We like going to Catherine's for two reasons; we really like the food and we think the service is great!

My best customer service experience was at a Marriott Courtyard. I arrived late at night and I needed a pair of panty hose. I was delivering a keynote speech the following morning and I did not have a rental car to go shopping. After explaining my dilemma to the desk clerk, he just asked, "what color and what size?" Within a half hour, there was a knock at the door. The desk clerk handed me two pairs of panty hose and didn't charge me a dime. That's exceptional service!

Some business owners know what it takes to keep their customers coming back! Are you one of them?

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