

## What's happened to Customer Service?

Honest...I'm a naturally positive person. The glass to me is always half-full. That's why I started to wonder if it was me lately. Can one guy have so many negative customer service experiences in such a short time period? Is business that good that Retailers and other consumer service providers aren't worried about repeat business? It seems not in my case.

Please do tell me if I'm wrong but I don't think I'm asking for people to go above and beyond. Meeting a customer's expectations right now seems like it would be a windfall. And, this isn't just a bitc\* session; I do have a couple of great experiences to share as well. In fact, I **love** to be delighted and share that with others.

Let's start with airlines (I know, we've all got a thousand of these to share). When on a recent Delta flight from Detroit to Chicago, the announcement goes "hello, as this is a very short flight, our typical service is standard no-service...but I do have a tray of water that we'll be offering you shortly." Huh? Your service standard is no service? I guess that means that **anything** I get is way above and beyond my expectations. Well, maybe yours but not mine. I guess I had better prepare better next time and **not** expect anything of you, except a lesson on how to help you get the passengers off the emergency chute if I choose to sit in the exit aisle (I will acknowledge though that all four flights were on time, a godsend these days).

How about dry cleaners? Gone to the same one for over a year (when the last one I was loyal to for three years went under). Dropped off shirts before a trip and requested that they be folded to avoid the ironing chore at the other end. Pick them up the night before the trip and...they're on hangers.

Me: "sorry, but I had asked for these to be folded."

Her: "sorry, the girl who took your order didn't know I was out of shirt folding stuff."

Me: "ah, wish I'd known. Maybe I could have taken them somewhere else this time to fold them."

Her: "sorry."

Ok, when you can't provide the service a customer wants/expects and is paying for, why don't you contact them and give them alternatives? If I felt like I had a hand in what is **my** decision, it would be different.

On to number three. I'm trying to score brownie points with my wife by replacing the particular brand of potato peeler that she loves (I know, I've got it good). So, I look on the web and find a HomeSense near where I'm staying. Call the store...

Me: "I'm looking for a Star brand potato peeler made in Switzerland. Can you please tell me if you carry them?"

Her: "sorry, I'm not able to give out that information."

Me: "so, do I have to come to the store to find out?"

Her: "yes"

Me: "ok, I'm not coming, thanks."

I do some more homework and find that it's carried at a nearby Home Outfitters. Go to that superstore, spend about ten minutes looking for the small utensils, locate what I want and then continue to meander through the store. Then I realize that the sales associates must receive corporate training, because every one of the four associates I pass purposely avoid me so we won't have eye contact or any interaction. Ok, I might have been interested in a new coffeemaker, but not when it's a hunting trip.

How about the good? I recently stayed at the [Staybridge Suites](#) in Markham, ON. I've stayed here on and off for ten years and the staff makes me feel welcome every single time. Yes, I've had some very minor

issues but when staff like Suresh (there since day one) can still greet me by name and ensures everything's taken care of, I'm going to be loyal to them. Why don't others get it?

I recently rented a car in Buffalo, NY. Reserved through Budget and halfway on my trip there, my wife gets a call at home to tell me there's no car waiting for me. Nada. Rented from them the previous four times I needed a rental car, but I guess that doesn't count for anything. So, my wife gets online and books me with [Enterprise Rent a Car](#) there. They treat me like a long-lost relative, the car is spotless, and I'm out the door in no time. I'm a pretty happy guy. Then, I get to Toronto and my car acts up. I call their hotline, we walk through a few steps and it appears the warning light issues can wait until I return to Buffalo, although they offer to exchange my car at the nearest Enterprise location to me. When I return to Buffalo a week later, Ryan Vander Sluis again greets me, hears the issue I had and asks how they can make it up to me. I don't really want anything, but happily accept his card with a double upgrade for my next rental...which will most definitely be with Enterprise.

So many companies suggest or proclaim that they want customers for life. Well, sorry but in this person's eyes, you have to earn that kind of loyalty.

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