

Customer Service Challenge

Recently, I had a bad experience with a business that reinforced what good customer service should be and the impact that bad customer service has on customers. I had ordered an appliance which came in and was picked up without difficulty. However, a week later I was still getting reminder calls to pick up my purchase. So, I decided to contact the store. I figured a quick call would solve the problem.

In this day of automation, I expected to get a recording instead of a live person and I was not disappointed. I then had to figure out which department I needed and announce it to this recording to be connected. No problem so far since I knew which department I wanted before I called. If I hadn't known, I could have listened to a long listing of departments, hoping that the department I needed was there. How much easier for the customer if a live person had been available to help me, saving me time and frustration. But that is not the goal of these recordings. The goal is to save the store money by not having a live person available.

The store must have decided to save additional money by having no one available to answer the phones in the departments. The phone just rang and rang, with no way to get back to that recording or a live person. So, I hung up and redialed. This time, I took a chance and said "Operator" when that recording came back on. I actually got a live person, "Nice Lady Number One" and I then proceeded to explain that I was trying to reach someone in Merchandise Pick Up but the phone just rang and rang. "No problem," she said. She then connected me to the very same department, Merchandise Pick Up, with the very same result - the phone just rang and rang.

By now, I was getting genuinely annoyed and redialing for a third time. I snap at the recording, saying Operator again. I do realize that getting angry at a recording is not the brightest thing to do but I am getting nowhere and my "quick call" was turning into a 15 minute process with the clock still ticking.

When a male voice comes on, I try to be calm and nice, since I know my problem with this process is not his fault. I tell him again for the second time what I am trying to do. I tell him where I called, with a quick "Please don't connect me to Merchandise Pick Up," in case he makes the same mistake as Nice Lady Number One. He informs me he will page the manager for me. Finally, I think I am going to get this resolved but why should it take the manager to fix this problem, not to mention three phone calls and now close to 20 minutes?

The phone starts ringing and I anticipate what I am going to tell the manager when abruptly, the phone stops ringing and hangs up on me! Obviously, "Male Operator" either did something wrong or assumed the manager would answer the page or phone.

I take a deep breath and dial for a fourth time. I say Operator again to the recording, trying not to seethe and remembering again that these people in the "support center" didn't create this mess. Management probably considers the system to be good customer service, and they don't realize the bad

impression this process has on its customers. They don't realize I could take my money and go elsewhere. They don't understand that all I want is the ability to talk to someone who understands my problem and actually wants to help me solve it and then solves it - all within a reasonable amount of time.

I get "Nice Lady Number Two" and start to actually laugh at the absurdity of this whole thing. I again launch into the story again, admonishing her not to connect me to Merchandise Pickup or the Manager, since neither of those worked yet. I then tell her it is her turn and challenge her to get me to a "live person who can help me". I know I sound rather snippy at this point but this is my fourth call.

Nice Lady Number Two says she is going to connect me to Shipping and Receiving. This sounds suspiciously like Merchandise Pick Up to me so I ask her if it is the same thing. She assures me it is not the same and off I go again. A few rings and I am connected to ... Merchandise Pick Up. Nice Lady Two lied to me! But at least I got a live person who could actually help me. He tells me the problem is when I picked up the item, it was not "recorded in the system" so I would have kept getting calls until it was noted in the computer. He promises to fix it so that doesn't happen and apologizes for the inconvenience of the call.

Little does he know...