

CUSTOMERS

72. It's 11 A.M.—Have You Called a Customer Today?

Stop.
Now.

*Call a Customer.
Out of the Blue.*

*"How can I help?"
"Have we delivered on every promise, implicit as well as explicit?"*

Listen and take copious notes.
Follow-up instantly on at least one "little" thing.
Repeat. 48-hours hence.

Hint: This applies to 100% of us.

73. There's Nothing But Nothing Cooler Than an Angry Customer!

"The problem is almost never the problem. The problem is invariably the response to the problem."—anon.

Bizarre but true: *Our most loyal customers are ones who had a problem with us ... and then marveled when we went the Extra Ten Miles at the Speed of Light to fix it!*

Business opportunity No.1* = Irate customers converted into fans. (*Yes, No.1.)

So ... are you on the *active* prowl for customer problems to fix? Rules:

Make "over"-reacting to problems a keystone in the corporate culture, a plank in the Corporate Values statement. (*"We respond to customers with passion and rapidity and resources in ways that stun-amaze-overwhelm those customers 100.00% of the time."*)

Reward (BIG TIME.) those who unearth ... and report ... customer problems.

"Over"-connect: let the customer know ASAP (!!), and update constantly—even if there is *absolutely nothing to report*.

Ensure that there are *devoted* resources at the ready to respond to problems. (No matter how good your systems, there *will* be problems—be staffed adequately, and then some, to respond at lightening speed.)

Repeat: Business opportunity No.1 = Irate customers converted into outspoken fans.

74. What We Have Here Is a Failure to Over-Communicate. I was flying home from Mexico City to Boston, on Delta, via Atlanta. The ATL-BOS leg was delayed about 75 minutes: *Never once did waiting area personnel or the pilot provide any explanation whatsoever. I do not exaggerate. Not one bloody, frigging word.*

No, this is not really news in "airline service sucks significantly land." Nonetheless, it serves as a not-quite-friendly alarm bell to all of us in any and every circumstance, signaling the ... *Insanely Important Value of Keeping People Informed/Over-informed 100.00% of the Time.*

We can almost all deal quite well with shit—we all/almost all deal very poorly with uncertainty. Tell me it'll probably be a 90-minute delay because the pilot is in the bar popping Tequila shots—and I'm fine. (More or less.) Total Silence? I'm on edge, pissed off as hell.

(Play back the last 24 or 48 hours. Is there an instance where you have failed to Fully Inform a Client, or other stakeholder, of a delay, wee or grand, or glitch? *If your answer is "nope, all is well"—you are a dunce.*)

75. Be "Entwined" with Your Client Came across, stuck in a book, the torn-out cover story from *Time*, 25 October 2004, "The God Gene." There was a quiz therein, "How Spiritual Are You?" I imagined, as a not particularly "religious person," I'd be in the lower quartile. But to my surprise, I scored 15/20—"highly spiritual, a real mystic."

Here's Question #1, to which I instantly answered "Yes": *"I often feel so connected to the people around me that it is as if there is no separation between us."*

Of course!

That's what my "speaking career" is all about!!

That's how I make a difference!!

No-Zero-Nada-Zip degrees of separation!!

So: Are you "one with your clients"—effectively "spiritually" entwined with those clients? Do you truly "get them"?

Richard Branson does.

Bill Marriott does.

Sam Walton did.

Anita Roddick did.

Lee Iacocca does/did.

(Would you buy a car from this man?)

Rick Wagoner—former GM boss—did not.

(Would you buy a car from this man?)

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