

“In This Issue: “Your Company’s Worst Enemy”

Test for Success
Tools, Tips, & Techniques for Avoiding
Hiring Mistakes and Developing People
From Helm and Associates, Inc.
And Kurt Helm

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Who are your company’s “worst enemies”? Your competitors? No, because they keep you focused on providing the best products and services to you customers. Your company’s “worst enemies” can be the people in your company who have direct contact with your customers and prospects.

The people in your company who have direct customer contact – the receptionist, administrative assistants, customer service reps, department heads and others – can be your company’s worst enemies if they forget for a moment that, when they are talking with a customer or prospect, they are the company’s goodwill ambassadors.

These are the people who represent the company to your customers and prospects. When your customers and prospects call or visit your company, the first people they talk with are, in that moment, not just representatives of your company; they ARE the company.

If these representatives of your company are having a bad day for whatever reason, they can come across to your customer or prospect as indifferent or rude. While your employee may not have been trying to be negative, that is the impression they may give. The customer or prospect probably won’t say anything at the time; they will just go away, feeling offended.

The feeling of being disrespected, whether intended or not, can easily create a negative impression of your company. As a result, your competitors may seem easier to do

business with. An employee who unintentionally takes his or her bad day out on a customer can contribute to customer turnover.

Of course, everyone has a bad day now and then. So, to avoid losing customers because of an employee's "bad day," incorporate the following into regular and consistent on-the-job training:

1. Make customer service a top priority. Be sure that everyone with customer contact hears this message. Hold regular training classes that emphasize how important it is to be a good company ambassador when dealing with clients and prospects, regardless of how a person feels at that moment. When interacting with a customer or prospect, it is "show time" – that is, it is time to step into the role of a positive partner in determining what the customer needs and finding a way to see that he or she gets it.
2. "Shop" your company. Restaurant companies pay people called "shoppers" to regularly eat in their restaurants without announcing who they are and rate the quality of the service, the food, the atmosphere, cleanliness, etc., for the restaurant company. Have someone call those areas of your company that have regular contact with customers and prospects and rate the person taking the call on friendliness, warmth, helpfulness, knowledge, etc. Provide objective feedback on the results of these calls to the individuals or groups that were rated.
3. Set up an on-going contest among those individuals who have regular contact with customers and prospects to reward the person or group that comes up with new and creative ways to enhance customer service.

Customers who come back again and again provide a solid base on which to build your company's growth. You lose customers for many reasons, some of which are under your control and some of which are not. New customers who replace the customers who leave, are the life-blood of your business. While finding and acquiring new customers is expensive and time consuming, obtaining pre-qualified prospects who were referred to your company by your satisfied customers is a much more efficient way to grow your business.

An early mentor of mine used to say, "People do business with people they like." Given the choice between two competing companies with essentially the same product or service, most people will choose to do business with the one with whom they feel most comfortable. To insure that your customers "like" to do business with your company, make sure that the people who have direct customer contact view their interactions with customers as one of the most important aspects of their job. Doing so can turn your company's (potentially) worst enemies into your company's best ambassadors.

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Remember, People ARE your most important asset!

To Hire the Best, Test!

To Reveal Management Potential, Test!

To Diagnose Problem Behavior, Test!

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