



What happen to the golden rule?

The new DHL TV commercial got it right. All we need is love, sweet love.

The scenes of the commercial flash through several scenes of bad customer service. Sadly enough, everyone has had these terrible experiences: Two clerks deep in private conversation, avoiding the customer, or an employee showing complete disregard.

”That sadly is what is true,” said Bill Drury, president of Bill Drury Seminars. ”There is a basic lack of courtesy. Unfortunately customer service is lacking in most industries.“

Business owners say it's location, location location,“that keeps their businesses afloat, he said. But they're wrong. It's customers, customers customers.

”Too often American companies focus on money,“ he said. ”But what they should be in business for is to build lifetime loyal customers.“

Ninety-six percent of unhappy customers don't report the problem to the manager or the boss.

”People vote with their feet,“ he said. Ninety-one percent of unhappy customers don't every buy from that company again, he said.

Drury began his career in 1985 and has presented more than 1,000 seminars to help small businesses achieve customer satisfaction.

A main point he will stress at a seminar in Gillette on Tuesday is the role of leadership positions.

”Leadership has to set the example,“ he said.

Employees do what they see. Leaders have to be good to their people and go the extra mile, he said. Businesses can't expect to treat their employees badly and have them turn around and be good to the customers.

Bad word of mouth is the most powerful damage a company can receive, he said. When a customer has a bad experience they tell an average of about 11 people - those people

tell 11 people, who tell 11 people and the cycle continues.

”Just think about the kind of damage an unhappy employee who spreads the word could do,” he said.

Over the years, Drury said the biggest problem he has seen is people who don't understand the basics of customer service. It's an art, but it's not difficult.

Nikki Albertson, Pat's Hallmark store manager, will attend the seminar with some of her employees and is excited to get some fresh ideas.

As a manager she already tries to focus on the importance of good customer service.

She knows to greet the customer and acknowledge they are in the store. She knows not to have personal conversations on the clock and to keep her staff knowledgeable. Her employees smile when they talk on the phone to sound cheerful and ask each other questions to help a customer quickly find what they need.

But her best tip is actually quite simple.

”Think about the negative experiences you've had and don't do that,” Albertson said.

Big Horn Hydraulics doesn't get many irate customers, but you can't please all the people all the time.

Rocky Mountain, inside sales worker at Big Horn Hydraulics, attended Drury's seminar on his last visit to Gillette. Mountain said customer service is pretty basic.

One element Mountain remembers Drury stressing is the importance of letting the upset customers vent out before you try to talk to them.

If not, they remain upset, he said.

He has also implemented working off stress during the work day.

”If you're having a stressful day take time to walk around,” he said. This prevents the employee from passing stress along to the customer, he said.

Perhaps the most basic element of customer service is the golden rule.

”Treat them how you want to be treated,” said Brad Follensbee, sales manager at White's Energy Motors.

The easiest way to treat customers like gold is to listen to what they have to say, Follensbee said.

”Most misunderstandings are a lack of communication,“ he said.

Too many times the employee will interrupt the customer because they think they know what the customer wants. If the associate knows what it is the customer wants they are much more able to resolve the person's issues.

- By Katie Baldwin, News-Record writer