

Customer Service at Baag Customer Care at Baag

Introduction

A few weeks ago I went to training at VECCI – the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The title of the day long course was Exceptional Customer Service.

Firstly, the training I went to and what it was about was not specifically on improving customer service.

I don't believe we are poor in customer service.

I am proud of how helpful, flexible and thoughtful we all are, in our dealings with our customers with each other.

It was about explaining to me where the expectations of customers are heading in the future.

And they told us that it is a fast moving train!

Customers are generalizing from one industry to another...so we are not isolated, we are in the area of "retail" not just nursery, hardware, giftshop or yard retail.

It is thought that global competition will drive customer standards up

It will also become increasingly important to develop relationships with customers.

They have so much choice on where to spend their hard earned cash.

The theme of the training can be condensed into:

The simple principle of give what you like to get.

I think we can say that we use our own internal guidance system on that.

How you like to receive service when you go to another retailer is how our customers would like to interact with us too.

They are coming to us with expectations and wanting an experience based interaction with us.

I have now heard this same information at numerous unrelated events.

This information seems to be of genuine importance to us.

First impressions

As they say you only get one chance at first impressions.

Research says that the first point of contact with us is actually felt on an emotional level.

It can be about how a customer feels when they come here, into the business and their initial connections with staff.

First Impressions applies for the whole presentation of our business, at the first points of contact for instance – our frontage, signage, display gardens product set up in front of the shop, the gift shop through gallery and also past the registers and then into the nursery scene! RO down the drive of course to the landscape supplies!

We have to project range and value in those first glancing seconds.

So we might not put our most costly items at the beginning of their experience.

The information I have been given is that customers really want to be acknowledged, with eye contact or a nod of the head.

Generally the thought at the moment is if they want help they will ask.

It is tricky, some people want to be left alone and others are, well very keen to have your time.

We are lucky, we seem to have a demographic that is varied, which means we have great opportunity to talk at least to different people with different needs and attitudes and expectations and values and needs.

And because we are dealing with customers so much over the telephone, a really good technique is to smile before answering the phone...it translates down the line!

I am really proud of the fact that we are authentic and unique

Who are our customers?

Paying patrons!

Each other!

Maybe even our suppliers...if we can help them they help us!

Getting customers to come

It is really hard to get people to come in, when they have other choices.

Like the big boxes.

Which is why we always want to convert them into a regular customer.

The statistic is that it costs 17 times more money to get a customer than to keep a customer.

How many times have we heard that people don't stop although they have been going past for years?

Or they didn't know what was going on in here, but now that they have stopped wow!

OR that they really really love what we do at baag.

I have been told on more than one occasion that people come here if they are feeling a bit low...it cheers them up.

We collectively provide people with that experience.

It is a very big movement at the moment in retailing about being local. And BAAG is a very local identity.

This preference for some people to shop local is in part related to:

– providing relevant to the customer – service, expertise and competitive prices (not necessarily the cheapest).

– Also trust and authenticity is something we do because we are local, and there are perceptions that it is more personal and that we have more invested in the customer – than say a multi-store based company.

What do our customers want?

This was a group exercise and the list is, probably in reasonable order of importance:

1. THEY WANT WHAT THEY CAME FOR. Delivery of product and service as agreed – time, cost, quality etc

2. A quality product and service – one that is representative of the price paid

3. A positive experience. That is the shopping experience, the facilities, finding what they need, getting the assistance they need.

4. GENUINE KNOWLEDGE AND HELP AND TO INFORM THEM

Customer assistance that displays the product and services available and providing the best match for the customers needs.

When people ask a question – it's because they don't generally know the answer. I know we get those folk who are trying to test us too!

5. The customer wants us to know our limitations – under promise and over deliver.

Another way to describe this is to know what it is we can and do deliver.

We don't promise a date for when a plant or other product will be available unless we are very confident.

And we don't promise a price unless we know it for sure. And if we do agree to a price let people know so we don't get that wrong later on.

Also, THE CUSTOMER perceives two types of promises when they come to Baag.

- The ones we make when we are dealing with them directly
- and the one's that Baag makes as a part of us being in business.

Baag policy in the staff handbook covers the area of over servicing. Which seems to relate to when some customers are using our time at the expense of others – we are a limited resource.....

We know some customers are draining and I will go into this a bit more with the nursery crew, but it is good to keep in mind that most people are easy to help, a few cost us more in time and energy.

WHAT DO CUSTOMERS NOT WANT?

- NEGATIVITY – the customer feels we aren't trying to help
- Lack of knowledge – when we don't know the information they need to make an informed decision – of course ask a colleague or offer to research it and call them back
- Lack of interaction with staff
- Lack of follow through by staff

Why do customer leave?

- 1% die
- 3% change location
- 5% make other relationships
- 9% go to the competition
- 14% are dissatisfied

68% due to sales person's indifference

The BEST Deal

Our new customer genuinely doesn't understand that we offer something they want more than the cheapest price.

I reckon we offer the best deal in town.

Because we are empowered to both help and not mislead the customer.

We have the best and most thoughtful attitude to customer help/care/service.

We don't have to sell them something! And we can sell them less or smaller plants.....

We ask enough questions to be sure they get the best result. That is actually what they are coming for!

How to build rapport to give the best deal – The psychology of rapport

Smile with welcome and body language, all build rapport that is where a customer feels we understand what they need.

We communicate in three main ways – Verbally, Visually and Vocally

Importance level is 8% – Verbal – the words that we use
importance level is 55% -Visual – what they see in our behaviors and body language
importance level is 37% – Vocal – the modulation, tone and volume of our voices

Active listening is generally thought to be a really helpful tool.

- Eye contact
- Nodding head
- Not interrupting
- Giving feedback that you are listening – not being distracted

The customer may not actually have any idea – this is where we use questions and anticipation to help.

Some questions to help might include....

1. What do you want your plant to do in the garden? (eg. screening, fruiting, edible, evergreen)
2. How much plant maintenance do you want to do? (eg. every day, once a year? etc)
3. What is your garden bed like or is it for a pot?
4. Would you like a native plant?

THE EXPERIENCE

The experience our customers want....

We are lucky we have a fun and funky image, this is memorable and differentiates us in the market.

The experience is made up of...

1. The first impression – as already discussed.
2. We must Deliver our product and service as ‘promised’.
3. Customers have an unsaid expectation now that we will anticipate what they need and set about fulfilling it. This comes back to us having the expertise to help them
4. Leaving a lasting impression – of a positive nature
5. Seamless service delivery. Essentially everyone is feeling under the pump in their lives and they want easy solutions, not stress.
6. To ensure satisfaction, we rectify mistakes simply and quickly – and the customer now always expects compensation – Refer to Paul! IT could just be a free punnet or a small discount – we don’t have to go over board but they do expect some sort of ‘make-it up to them’.

CONTINUITY OF SERVICE – REALLY IMPORTANT ONE – seamless hand over from one person to another

- give the information to the other staff member so they can continue to help with customer
- rather than the customer being inconvenienced by having to explain again.

CONTINUITY OF SERVICE ALSO MEANS

- that we deliver consistency of approach and interaction. Not too much up and not too much down – just right like for goldilocks.

BAAG Policy Matters

Refunds and Returns

1. No refund or exchange can be made without manager authorization. It is best if the manager of that section authorizes it.
2. All refunds must be clearly explained on a return slip. The initial receipt from the register needs to be attached.
3. A product can be exchanged without a receipt if a manager authorizes this.
4. Faulty products like sprinklers and timers must never be refunded immediately. The section manager will deal with it during the week.

Returns of plant material

1. We don’t sell dead plants so, a person will have taken a plant in a condition that will have allowed it to thrive (bareroot is an exception – investigation by a weekday manager will be necessary)
2. It is industry policy to not allow us to return plants (generally speaking) so we have the same principal for customers. If a plant is returned on the same or next day, and appear in excellent condition (and as though they have not been taken out of the pot!) they can likely be returned or exchanged.

Specials

1. When we run garden club specials, the special applies to the stock on hand not new orders, unless approved by a manager.

SOME FUN STATISTICS

1 IN 25 CUSTOMERS HAVE A COMPLAINT – WHETHER THEY TELL YOU OR NOT

6 IN 24 HAVE SEVERE PROBLEMS – WHETHER THEY TELL YOU OR NOT

24 PEOPLE EACH TELL 10-20 PEOPLE THEY FELT DISSATISFIED

75% of people say if they have good customer service they spend more

95% of people buy gifts at stores they get good customer service from

78% of customers will withdraw from a transaction if they get poor customer service