

## Forget the Fockers. Meet Your Customers!

by Craig Harrison

How much do you know about your customers? Do you know what makes them happy? Mad? Restless?

Let's face it, you should! Businesses often operate in ignorance of what their customers like or dislike, ignore and abhor. To ensure retention, pay attention!

### The Basics: What Customers Love

- When you know them, remember them by name and remember their preferences.
- To be treated with respect
- To feel special
- To know you're accountable when problems arise
- The ability to reach a live voice or person when problems arise
- To receive lagniappe - a little something extra, for their money's worth

### The Basics: What Customers Hate

- The runaround - and having to repeat one's predicament repeatedly
- Labyrinthine voice mail [systems](#)
- Ignorant salespeople
- Apathetic employees
- Being put on hold
- Being left on hold
- Being disconnected after holding
- Poor routing of their phone call to the incorrect person
- Repeatedly hearing how important their patronage is while on hold indefinitely
- Canned e-mail responses that are unresponsive or miss the particulars of the problem
- Sales reps with surly or superior attitudes who are condescending
- Lack of empathy
- Taking customers for granted
- Being nickel and dimed!
- Adhering to the letter of the law as opposed to the spirit of the law

### How We Can Win Points With Customers

- Exceed their expectations!
- Anticipate client needs even before they do
- Proactively head off problems before they occur
- Advocate for your customers with management
- Provide full service - offering one-stop shopping for myriad client needs
- Make doing business with you fun and easy
- Don't make charge-backs, returns and problems problematic to address
- Grow with your customers
- Treat them like royalty and employ a touch of class in your interactions

## **Your Next Steps**

- Audit your sales and customer service process; look for ways to streamline both for your customers' convenience.
- Make sure your sales reps know your product lines inside and out.
- Poll your customers to uncover new ways to better serve them.
- Create a marketing plan for keeping in front of your customers: e-zines, ads, invites, demos, sales and courtesy calls, focus groups and other mechanisms.
- Review your returns; look for patterns and trends. Fix systemic flaws in your systems.
- Seek to reward devoted, long-term customers for their loyalty.
- To the extent possible, meet and better acquaint yourself with your customers so they're more than a customer number or account name.

Don't treat customers like dreaded in-laws. Treat them like beloved family!  
With these words I thee wed.