

Empathy

Some call it sympathy. Whichever you call it, it needs to be there. When someone has a problem, we need to empathize with them and show we understand the frustration they're going through. What we don't want to do, however, is tell a customer, "I know exactly how you feel." Because you aren't able to know exactly how anyone else feels. But you can empathize, and that's why empathy is KEY for a service mentality.

Here's a better way to explain it. I had my wallet stolen a few months ago while on vacation. Everything was in it...and the money was the least of my problems. Credit cards, check book, car registration, drivers' license...all of it GONE.

Over the years, I have learned to be a "good" customer, so I called the first credit card company and told them of my plight. I said, "Hi, my name is Randi Busse and I'm on vacation and my wallet was just stolen. Everything's gone." And I told her what was in the wallet. She said without skipping a beat, "NAME?" I said, "It's still Randi Busse."

Where was her empathy, her sympathy? It wasn't there! All I needed to hear was a simple, "Gee, that's got to be so frustrating. Let me get the ball rolling to help you."

Enthusiasm

We need enthusiasm whenever we help a customer. They need to know you are truly excited to help. (Of course, we need to do this without going over the top and giggling our way through the conversation.) Enthusiastic customer service people get the job done faster, simpler, and with a touch of class. How much enthusiasm do you show in your job?

Responsibility

This is one of the most important keys to a great service mentality. Be responsible for your job, your position and the company. Being responsible means it is your job.

If you have answered the call on behalf of your company, you have indeed accepted 100% responsibility for the call. "I wasn't here," "I don't know anything about that," "It's not my department," or all those other lines are not in the responsibility key of customer service.

Take responsibility for the call. You answered it. It's yours! This is important in face-to-face situations as well.

Ownership

A cousin of responsibility. So many times we hear and see people in the customer service arena who don't want to take ownership of the problem. When you own the problem, you'll handle it far better than if you don't want anything to do with it.

And don't forget...never take those barbs from the customer personally. They're not attacking YOU. They're attacking the problem. You're just the lightning rod, not the target. So own the customer you're working with - on the phone or in person!!! Take Ownership!

Session: "Building a Healthy Work Environment & Effectively Handling Critical HR Issues"

Material prepared by Workforce Development Group Inc.

How to Cultivate an Attitude of Ownership Among Your Employees

Have you ever done business with a company and dealt directly with the owner? What kind of experience did you have? Did you feel valued and appreciated and treated as if you were their only customer? If so, how did that make you feel?

Close your eyes for a moment and imagine if every time **your** customers dealt with your company they felt valued, appreciated and treated as if they were your company's only customer. I'll bet they would not only continue doing business with your company but they would also tell their family and friends about your company as well.

Unfortunately, many employees see themselves as one-dimensional in relation to their company—as a reservationist, or a dispatcher, or a driver. What would it be like if everyone in your organization started thinking and acting like owners of the business? What if your employees shared the same beliefs, both in their abilities and in the purpose of your business? What if they focused all their energy on making your business successful—knowing that they, in turn, would become successful as well? That is the power of an ownership culture and you can have it in your organization.

If employees acted like owners, customers would never again hear the words, "That's not my job, it's not my department, and they don't pay me to do that." These words are the sign of a person who not only doesn't love his work, but also doesn't have an owner mentality.

So without giving actual stock certificates to your employees, how do you get them to think and act like owners?

The first place to look is in the mirror. Look at the way you are treating your employees. The way you treat them is the way they will treat your customers. You model the behavior you want them to demonstrate. Treat your employees well and they will do the same to your customers. Yell and scream at your employees and you can almost guarantee that your employees will do the same to your customers.

Empower your employees. Give them the knowledge, skills and tools they need to not only do their job, but also to go above and beyond, especially when it comes to dealing with your customers. When employees are empowered they don't look up the hierarchy for answers, they take responsibility to solve problems where they occur. They have the freedom to act and are also accountable for the results. When a mistake is made, they do whatever it takes to recover.

Eliminate the "policies" and "procedures" that get in the way of them thinking and acting like an owner. Oftentimes when a customer is upset and they ask to speak with the owner, the customer winds up getting exactly what they wanted in the first place. Why put your customer (and your employee) through that exercise in the first place? Tell your employees, "I want you to handle it like you own the business. You're a smart person. You'll do the right thing." Just watch what happens with performance when you express sincere confidence in this way to your employees. They will soon start acting like owners. Watch how efficient and effective things become when we push decisions down to their lowest possible level and cut the tape required to get everything but the major decisions done.

Talk about what's going on in your organization with your employees: the good, the bad and the ugly. There's nothing worse than an employee to hear it secondhand or worse yet, from a customer. Your employees are the front-line and have the most interaction with your customers. It's important for them to have the information they need to respond appropriately to your customers. Make them look good and they'll make the company look good.

Ask your employees for their feedback: what's working, what's not, what customers like, what customers are complaining about. Pick your employees' brains. They have the inside scoop on what your customers are saying.

Imagine if you tapped your employees for their insider knowledge. You could transform your business and give customers what they really want. And in the process, you are engaging your employees in the process and making them feel valued that they are an important part of the team.

You have to carefully breed a culture where employees feel they can take risks, implement their ideas without discouraging amounts of bureaucracy, and benefit personally from the outcome of their actions. Your employees are the most important asset your company has. Treat them that way and you will create a culture that has everyone acting like an owner of the company.

Who do YOU want to deal with when you do business with a company? I'll bet it's an owner. Now you can have them working for your company too. Your customers will be glad you do!

The Words You Choose Help You Win or Lose



What Rant Says

That's not my job....

I can't ...

You can't...

I'm not sure...

You have to.....

You should have....

We can't do anything....

It's out of our control....

It's our policy.....

You shouldn't feel that way...

I don't know...



What Rave Says

I can help you with that...

Here's what I can do...

Here's what you can do

Let me see what I can do

Please...

May I suggest...

Let's look at our options...

I'm sorry...

Let's see what we can do...

I would feel the same way...

That's a good question...