



Customers Count!
How to Build Fiercely Loyal Customers

Guidebook

Overview

The purpose of this lesson is help with you and your organization to move your customers through a series of relationship levels to reach the highest level, Evangelist! or become Fiercely Loyal Customers.

Evangelists not in a religious sense but these fans preach and devote themselves to their favorite products and services, hopefully yours.

They are really, really, really loyal customers, fiercely loyal!

Once these folks are fiercely loyal they will offer testimonials, become great case studies for the company and provide inspirational customer stories that can even go viral. They tell their friends and their social media sites about how great your company is.

Let's review the levels of customer relations

Once the job has been sold we now begin developing and moving the relationship with the customer towards the Evangelist level.

Here is what this looks like:

Vendor to Trusted Advisor to Partner to “Raving Fan”

to

Evangelist

Now you might be wondering what we mean by each of these levels, well here you go.

Vendor

If your customer treats you like a "vendor", well in their eyes you are a commodity. No different than the latest dishwasher soap. Humm, not a very good position to be in. If your competitor is 1% cheaper, adios baby you are gone! So it's important to move up the ladder to at least a trusted advisor or you are in a very precarious position.

Remember if you target customers like this you will be bidding every job and LOW bid gets it. Better to target customers that you can at least negotiate the price.

You will need to get to the next level quickly!

Trusted Advisor

The next step up the ladder is "trusted advisor". Now this is a better position to be in - at least the customer respects you. When questions come up regarding the landscape they will usually give you a ring to get your opinion. If they need additional work they will

usually give it to you, without bidding it out. And, If your customer gets the 1% lower price from a competitor they will most likely give you "last look".

Not too bad but let's keep moving along

Partner

The third step up the ladder is "partner". Now we're talk'n. When you reach the partner level in your customers eyes you have arrived. In this position usually your customer will not make a move without consulting you. If you mess up, your customer will forgive you. This is a great position to be in. Usually only 10% to 20% of your customers feel this way about you.

"Raving Fan"

The fourth step is "raving fan". This is a "partner" that raves about your company. They absolutely love you. It's hard to get better than that, but it can. Partners and raving fans can bring you a ton of referrals.

Does it get better than that? Maybe.....

Evangelist

Ok the last step is evangelist....these folks are partners and raving fans squared! They preach to their friends, relatives and even better on social media just how great you and your company is. They even preach to strangers about your legendary service. You are gold in this spot, no platinum. These are the folks that are just awesome, hard to find but when you do, take care of them cause they will take care of you.

You have arrived now keep it alive!

Fiercely Loyal Customers deliver with:

- *loyalty; through thick and thin year after year
- *referrals; to friends family colleagues and strangers
- *up sales and extras with little or no haggling
- *forgiveness; they know you will make it right
- *profits; the longer they stay the more you make

Examples of Good vs Bad Service

We all have examples of bad service dealt out by employees with bad attitudes. How does that make you feel? Frustrated even angry at times. You want to just scream. Well, instead most people just tell all their friends and post it on their favorite social media sites.

But just the opposite occurs when we have a great service experience. For those who have been a guest at the Ritz Carlton Hotel, especially for a few nights can testify at the awesome level of service and genuine caring the employees demonstrate. I have personally experienced this and was duly impressed.

Other awesome examples are Zappos where their customer service representatives offer the purchasing of shoes and boots a truly positive experience. If you have ever talked to them or deal with them you know what I mean.

The grocery store, Stu Leonard's in Norwalk, CT, holds the Guinness Book of World Records for selling the most milk and eggs than any other store in the world! They didn't achieve that by poor customer service. Quite the opposite. When entering the store every customer is confronted with a huge three ton Granite rock with the inscription,

“Rule #1, The Customer is Always Right; Rule #2, If the Customer is Ever Wrong, Re-Read Rule #1.” Shopping at Stu's is amazing and they offer an experience like no other grocery store in the world.

So great customer service makes you feel great. Let's work toward offering that level of service in your company.

In order to accomplish this type of service this level of customer service, you need a great customer service Vision/Mission.

Let us explain.

Have a clear Vision:

- A clear vision of what the perfect customer experience should look like
- “Imagine perfection centered on the customer”
- Know what your customers want.

Know what your customer's Vision is:

- Know what the key things your customers want
- Your Vision will help fill in the gaps and fulfill their wants and needs

Always keep in mind that:

- “Relationships are at the Root of our Success”, no pun intended.

Be focused on:

- “Building mutually beneficial long lasting, enduring relationships that are built on trust, competence, confidence and friendship”
- Remember your goal of moving your customer from, *Vendor > Trusted Advisor > Partnerships and becoming “Raving Fans” and even Evangelists.

Have your Customers know you are there for them:

- “Give them peace of mind while making their landscape and them look good”
- “Serve as stewards of their landscape to maintain and sustain a safe and aesthetically pleasing environment for a fair and reasonable price”

Think about:

Become conscience/ aware of the various levels of customer relations and how they affect your brand.

Study these lessons and find ideas to implement in your company that will help your customers become raving fans and ultimately become evangelists.

Exercise:

What is the perfect vision of the customer experience? What will they experience?

How well are we delivering on this perfect Vision now?

What is our Vision, our Mission Statement?

How does our Vision and Mission Statement affect or relate to our customers?

How does our Vision and Mission Statement get communicated to our employees?

Does our Vision and Mission need to be revisited, reworked, refreshed, re-kindled?

Ask yourselves:

How do we know when our Customer Service has built “Fiercely Loyal Customers?”

You know you have “Fiercely Loyal Customer” when:

- Retention: % of numbers of contracts and \$ value is at 98% +
- Enhancement: % of contracts: 45% +
- Referrals from friend or other customers 80%+
- Survey Says: 85%+ 4 & 5s
- Letters and commendations along with testimonials: good fresh supply
- Jobs and projects are negotiated not “bid” out
- There is a “win – win” approach and attitude

- Frequency and types of requests: More proactive less reactive
- Numbers of “Fire Drills” or service recoveries: few, affectively dealt with and learned from

You know when your Company is building a “Fiercely Loyal Customer” culture when you observe:

- How quickly you are learning and adapting as a result of your service delivery hiccups
- When your culture is totally “focused” with an understanding and commitment towards customer relations and moving these relations to the next level
- Recognize the importance of customer relations to the success of your organization.

Let’s ask ourselves the following questions and see how you are measuring up.

How do we measure up? With retention?

With % enhancement to contract sales?

With referrals to new work?

Check your Customer Relations process:

Do we have a customer survey process?

What has it told us?

If not, should we develop?

Are we more proactive or reactive? Give examples of each.

How can we be more proactive?

Where have we had our “fire drills” or “hiccups”?

What caused them?

What has been done to prevent these “fire drills” from happening again?

Now let's learn what can be done to move your customers up to Raving Fan- Evangelist level or if they are already there how can we keep them there!

Lesson #1

Finding & Keeping the Right Customers

One of the main reasons companies lose money is they have the wrong customers. This is understandable when the company is new and growing because owners for the most part take any job to increase their needed cash flow. But just as soon as possible, as the company matures and can afford to, the owner and managers should create a customer selection criteria. Learn when to say "no" and when to say "go" after this customer.

For a copy of the Harvester Customer Selection Criteria you can download at the end of these lessons.

Once you have the criteria in place you can target your marketing. Your target should be your core strength and profitable. As part of your marketing you should learn how to contact and sign up more of those profitable customers. Then, once on board you can work to keep these customers happy and move them to your raving fans and/or evangelizers list. Just how to do this will be fully explored in this lesson.

Here are some Selection Criteria you should consider BEFORE you do business with someone:

FINANCIALLY STABLE: Fiscally healthy; pays on time.

SIZE: Not less than \$_____ per month; unless it is on the site of an existing job.

PERFORMANCE BASED: Not a "body count" type of mentality; focuses on results not methodology.

VALUE DRIVEN: Understands what we bring to the table and that price is not the primary decision factor; recognizes the importance of the landscape to their business.

IMPROVEMENT: Understands the importance of investing in the project to increase value

LOYALTY: Stable relationships with contractors; doesn't change contractors often.

LONG RANGE COMMITMENT: Willing to commit to a multi-year contract.

REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS: Understands landscape maintenance reality; does not call random, unnecessary, and frequent fire drills. Specifications are reasonable and can be met.

WIN-WIN ATTITUDE: Values partnerships that promote a mutually-beneficial, long-term relationship; is collaborative and respectful of others.

POTENTIAL: Related to additional properties that may require landscape service.

REFERENCE: Will serve as a good reference and testimonial; is likely to refer other clients to our company.

LOCATION: Job location is within the targeted geographic area. Size of the job may override the distance to the job site.

MARKET TYPE: Fits within our preferred client market-(i.e., owner operated).

RELATIONSHIP: Currently doing business with a sister company; positive experience with the sister company.

Action Steps:

- Develop a Selection Criteria for your company, use the one included or customize your own
- Know when to say no! Do you know when and how to say NO?
- Develop a thanks but no thanks protocol that is professionally given

Lesson #2

Building Relationships: Transactional vs. Relational

I don't know how many of you have ever shopped at Wal-Mart but I frequent the store about once a month. There is a store about 10 minutes from my house and it's the perfect place to go for many commodity type items. Oh, and it is cheaper than most anywhere else for sure. But shopping at Walmart is not exactly like shopping at Nordstrom's or Saks. Although some of the folks that work where I shop are pretty nice for the most part, I would describe it as a "transactional store, a transactional experience". You certainly don't go there expecting anyone will help you and if you do want help and go to the customer service counter there is usually 8 people ahead of you in line. And, when you check out at the register most of the cashiers avoid eye contact never mind say thank you or smile. But it is what it is. I don't expect more.

But as "green industry" business people, we are in the service business and I believe from my more than 40 years of experience that it's truly a relationship business. It's built on trust. So it's really important that you get to know your customers and make them feel good about you and your company.

When you talk to your customers make them feel good. Be positive. Be helpful. Do what you say you are going to do. Make them feel like they are your only customer when you talk to them. Become their friend, a person they can count on.

Friends help their friends. So try and anticipate their needs and manage their expectations. That's covered in more detail in a bit but I think you know what I mean. Be genuine, be caring and continue to strengthen your relationship with them and if you do they will be customers for life.

The one thing I would like to mention is it takes time to accomplish this. In the beginning they may treat you like any of their other "vendors" but if you work on it, over time you can move them to trusted advisor. If the relationship clicks, you know if your chemistry jells, then over time you can move them to partner and more. The key is to keep working on the relationship. Be conscious of the relationships with your customers and never take them for granted.

Exercise

List the top 20% of your customers and rate them, are you at a vendor, trusted advisor, partner, raving fan, or evangelist level?

How many of your customers are raving fans or evangelists?

Make a list of those top 20% and create a plan to contact them either by email, notes, lunches, etc. on a regular basis. Best to contact them enough so they feel cared for but not so much they feel annoyed. I used to take the top 20% of my commercial clients to lunch about every 6 months. I would walk their property every month, not with them but with my account manger. At least once if not twice a year I would however invite the managers to walk the grounds with my account manager and then take them to lunch. Unless they were crazy busy they loved that.

Lesson #3

Start the relationship off right

If you want to start your business relationship off right one essential thing is to make sure there is "clarity of expectations". Yes you may have signed contracts, a deposit and an approximate start date but is there truly a clarity of what your customer should expect. For example, how long will the job take, what happens if it rains, what could possible delay the job, what decisions will they be expected to make along the way, that's the type of things I'm talking about.

One very important thing in starting out a relationship is to have great communications. If you are doing a design for your customer and it may take a few weeks to complete, be sure to touch base with them at the very least once a week. Also, be sure to use the method of communication they want you to use. Some prefer email, others a text while others may just want you to call and chat for a moment. One thing for sure they will appreciate your thoughtfulness with respect to this.

Our final thought on this is to be sure, once the job is started you and or your people give it 100% of your attention and focus. That first couple of days are critical and it doesn't matter if it's a design build or maintenance job, or your installing or maintaining interior plants, make sure the proper attention is given to the very start.

Action Steps:

- What are you doing to start up your jobs and relationships?
- Is there a startup protocol? Is it done consistently?
- If not what needs to be done to build

Lesson #4

Get to know your customer

Most green industry business owners agree that this is a business built on relationships and quality work. But it has been my experience that most do not really know their customers. Oh everyone agrees it's important but they ask, how do we accomplish this? Or, we don't have the time to do this.

It's my contention that it's not about the time but about being conscious to find out key things about your customers. What I did when I owned my company was create a client profile sheet, or a customer relation's management sheet. You may want to Google "Harvey McKay 66" and when you do you will see the 66 questions that Harvey tries to find out about his customers. I used Harvey's sheet as a model and then created my own questions.

I had one 8 ½ by 11" sheet for every customer we had. We put them in notebooks. Now there wasn't room or need for 66 questions but we put the ones we felt were appropriate and what we wanted to know about what people liked and didn't like about their landscape.

Some ask how you get the answers to these questions? Well you don't sit down with your client and drill them, the answers come up in conversations, well if you ask the right leading questions. At the end of your discussion with your customer, either on the phone or in person job down notes on our CRM sheet. This way when you talk again or

if another account manager takes over your book of business he can “hit the deck running” because he has so much detail about them.

Your customers are your business so get to know them with this easy method and your relationship will continue to build.

Action Item

At the end of the lessons download the Harvey McKay 66 and use this as a model to build your own CRM profile sheet.

Or refer to our Harvest Group shortened version for customer profile

Lesson #5

Understand Your Customer

- Know their needs and their pain: meet and exceed their needs, cure their pain
- Practice “Active” listening
- Know and speak their language
- Know their business: where are they in their business cycle? Start-up, established, declining
- Establish customer profiles
- Know their culture
- Know their budgets
- How are they measured?
- Organizational Mapping: Who reports to whom?

Questions:

How well do we know our customers?

Pick top 10 and drill down.

On a separate sheet of paper list your top 20% of your customers, then pick the top 10 and ask the questions listed above to see how well we really know and understand them.

What of the above items needs work, creating, changing or implementation?

Lesson #6

Managing Expectations & Anticipate Needs

When Mrs. Jones asks you to plant red and white petunias around her pool, will she need to remind you next season to do this work or will you contact her a month or so in advance and ask if she wants the same colors as last year. This is managing her expectations. If you don't have a system or computer program to track this eventually you are going to "drop the ball" and disappoint her. This is not good. It doesn't show you care. Best to be proactive and anticipate her expectations. She will be a "happy camper" and you will move her closer to loyal customer to raving fan or evangelizer.

Another way you can really impress the Joneses is to anticipate their needs. Perhaps you saw disease on their trees last year and suggest to them that this year you spray a fungicide to prevent this problem and possibly the ultimate death of the trees.

Or you find out from the Joneses that they are having a big pool party on the 4th of July. You might suggest items that would really make their grounds sparkle. Not only will they be pleased with your caring concern and proactively, you will have increased your enhancement sales! A win- win for you both.

Action Items

Ask each time you meet or touch base: Ask are you completely satisfied? What will it take to make you completely satisfied?

Don't ask how are we doing? Most customers will then ask you should know how you are doing

Lesson #7

Human Touch Points

In this lesson we want to see how easy we are to do business with. Let's put ourselves in the shoes of the customer. Let's do the best we can to analyze our customers experience with us. You may need to measure this over a period of a few weeks or even a month. The question is how well do you measure up when it gets really busy!

Calls to your office

Does the caller get voice mail ?

Do we have good phone manners?

How many rings before we pick up ?

Voice

How do we sound - in a hurry – calm inviting?

Transactional or friendly?

Ask permission to put on hold?

Can the caller hear your smile?

Return Calls

How long does it take to return customer calls?

What is the "tone of the call" ?

Emails

Do you always re-read your emails before you hit the send key?

Are you emails friendly and cordial or transactional and overly businesslike?

Face to Face

When you meet your customer what is your appearance like ?

Did you confirm your appointment?

Are you smiling and positive?

Are you on time and prepared?

Communication for their job

How good is your communication.

Pre-job?

At job startup?

During the job?

After job ?

“Walk Arounds/ Throughs”

Do you invite your customers to walk their properties to check the health of their plants and show them potential areas of improvement ?

Do you send personal notes, articles of interest or visit the job after to monitor the results?

Action Items

Fill out this brief questionnaire above

Now you should be able to get a good sense of how well you are communicating with your customer and make any necessary changes

What changes are needed?

Lesson #8

System Touch Points

The following items are customer touch points without you being directly involved. It's the involvement with your customer and your company. All of these touch points have either a positive or negative feel for your customer and you are being constantly judged by how easy your are to do business with and what others are saying about you. Let's go over them one by one. Again, be honest and fill out the questionnaire to see how you stack up in this area.

Your web site

Is it transactional or warm and friendly _____?

Voice mail messages

This can be in your office phone when callers are put on hold, or your after hours message or the message callers get on your cell phone. Are these messages transactional or warm and friendly _____?

When have you stopped and listened to each of these messages from your customers point of view _____?

Your business cards

Are your business cards clean and uncluttered with all the necessary information _____?

Ads and direct mail

What impression do your current customers get when they see ads or direct mail for your services _____?

Your logo

Is your logo easy to read, even on your truck if it goes by you at 40 miles per hour _____?

Your invoices and stationery

Do your invoices and stationery have your logo and contact information _____?

Are your invoices easily understood, customer friendly _____?

Social Media Sites

What are social media sites, like Angie's List, Yelp, face book, etc., saying about your company, are there positive or negative comments _____?

Action Steps:

- After this review you will have a pretty good idea what it's like for your customer – any surprises?
- What needs work? Ask how, who, and when will it get done?

Lesson #9

Your People (Employees) Your Culture

Convince your people that customer service and building Fiercely Loyal Customers is essential to the company's success and must be ingrained in our culture.

In order to have this positive friendly customer service culture in your company it's important to hire people with good attitudes. They need to have good aptitudes (the ability to learn quickly) along with strong listening and communication skills and be flexible with dealing with customers.

It's also important that the people you hire and the ones that are part of your team have a good solid work ethic, are self-motivated and are goal orientated. They have to love what they do and passionate about providing outstanding customer service.

Ask yourself the following few questions.

Do your people love what they do ?

Are they passionate about giving good service ?

How have they dealt with customers in the past ?

Do they have job descriptions ?

Regular performance reviews ?

Agreed upon goals that include customer satisfaction ?

Do they receive praise for good work ?

Is it fun to work in your organization?

In order to help develop your customer focus you may want to set up internal discussion groups to talk about how everyone is doing. It's important to have them all understand "it's all about the customer" and "it's all about them". Happy employees make happy customers.

In order to accomplish this positive type culture when compliments are given to your staff, because of their great service or friendliness, its super important that they be recognized and or rewarded.

In your meetings train your people so they understand what great customer service looks like. Explain how we have to move them from *Vendor > Trusted Advisor > Partnerships and becoming "Raving Fans" even evangelists.

.....and - that the process is understood in order to accomplish this.

Empower your people

Some companies preach customer service but don't empower their people to really practice it. By this I mean they don't allow their people to fix problems on the spot. The Ritz Carlton Hotel model is a good one to follow. Their customer service model allows a certain dollar amount to be spent to fix a problem. They don't want angry or upset guests, so when small problems arise their people have a fixed amount of money that is preauthorized to solve the problem. In this way they don't need to get their bosses approval so the problem is resolved immediately. The guest is not only pleased but impressed by the quick resolution and tells his friends what a great hotel it is. Everyone is happy.

Questions to ponder.....

Are your managers pre-authorized to solve problems without having to consult their boss or you _____?

If they are pre-authorized do you have a fixed amount they can spend to resolve a problem ?

If so how much?

Will it depend on the size or nature of the job or who the customer is (explain) ?

When doing a job and the customer asks if they could do a particular item – you know as a favor – do your people know just how much they can do as a favor before they really need to charge the customer ?

Lesson #10

Building and Maintaining a Fiercely Loyal Customer Service Culture

Relationships need to be nurtured otherwise they begin to fade.

Suggestions to Keep Relationship Warm

- Personal Notes
- Articles of interest to your customer
- Visits to their property to show you care
- Gifts when appropriate
- Surveys: either formal (written) or informal, over coffee or lunch
- Coffee or Lunch – occasionally to keep the relationship fresh
- Calls or emails: be careful here, don't waste a busy customer's time.

Ask yourselves:

- When was the last time you reached out to your customers?
- Who needs to be warmed up? How? Who? When?
- What ways work the best?
- These are some ideas to keep connected with your customer, next we'll talk about how to develop evangelizers in lesson #11

Lesson #11

Developing Evangelizers

“Consistently Reliable - Reliably Consistent-Service”

The statement above was my motto when I was in business. We worked extremely hard to do this. If you are doing maintenance work for your customer then it's important to maintain consistent quality. If you can do that they usually will be amazed because this is difficult to achieve and most customers know that.

If you want to develop evangelizers it's best to offer small surprises on top of your consistent service. With one of my clients we planted new flowers in the middle of summer on their front walkway at no charge. An expense yes, but not that much in proportion to the size of the job. Were they delighted? Yes. She spread the word to many of her neighbors on the street and as a result this crew could spend one full day without moving their truck servicing all of the new customers!

Referrals

When a customer, maybe a “raving fan” or evangelizer refers you to one of their friends this is “gold”. Be sure to reward them. In my book, *Green Side Up*, Straight talk on growing and operating a profitable landscaping business, I have a chapter called, “Keep Referrals Rolling in the Door”.

Whether you get the job or not from your customer be sure to send them a note thanking them for the referral. Then, send them a gift depending on the size of the job. But please don't offer to give them a free plant or tree or credit on their invoice. Buy the a gift! Give them a gift certificate to a great restaurant. Do something that will be memorable to them. If you do this the referrals will keep rolling in. Your goal should be to get about 80% of your work from referrals.

Ask Yourselfes

- How do you reward your customers for referrals?
- For being loyal?

Lesson #12

Moments of Truth

During every customer relationship there is almost always a, “moment of truth”. This is a request above and beyond your normal scope of work.

An example might be your long time customer calls and tells you his daughter is getting married and they are having the wedding in their backyard in 2 weeks. In all the excitement he forgot to contact you. They want you to replant all the shrubs, add a few hundred flats of flowers, re-mulch all the beds, install a new patio, I think you get the idea. This is a moment of truth. If you come through and pull it off you are a hero, if not – well.....I think you know the answer to that.

In my business I took care of a large mall for years. Almost every year the owners would fly in from Australia to do their annual inspection. They usually gave the mall manager two weeks notice before their arrival. As soon as he got notice he have me notice and I would have to put 10 to 12 people to work at the mall for at least a week. One time I had a crew of 10 there 24 hrs. a day for a good part of a week. The team worked 12 hours on 12 hours off until it was done. Oh they paid dearly for this craziness but I guess they didn't care as long as we met their, “moment of truth”. I kept this account for some 20 years.

Ask yourselves

- What moments of truth have you had?
- How did you deal with them?
- How did they end up benefitting your company?

Lesson #13

Service Recovery

It seems like no matter how hard you try to keep things perfect sometimes you or your crews mess up. I could write a separate book just on the crazy mess ups over the years. But the key is - when it happens, and it will, what you do.

So, how do you deal with the angry customer?

Listen and recognize the problem

Whether on the phone or in person the best thing to do is LISTEN, don't talk, just listen until they are done venting. You could ask appropriate questions to get the matter clear but that is until they have finished. Interrupting an upset customer is the worst thing you can do, so again listen and listen carefully.

Active Listening and Acknowledgement

After they finish and you'll know when that is recognize their problem, restate it back to them and then acknowledge to them that there is a problem.

Apologize, be sincerely sorry

Next, apologize! Tell them how sorry you are this happened, etc. Don't grovel but make sure they feel you care and can feel their pain.

Own It!

Next – you own the problem. DON'T blame the manager, the company, anybody. DON'T tell them how you are going to report it to whomever, tell them how YOU are going to work to fix the problem. If you hear the problem, YOU own the problem, period.

Discover what it will take to fix from their perspective

Ok now that you have the problem, work to fix it. Contact who ever in the company you have to and get it resolved. One smart thing you should do is ask the customer what they want to resolve the problem. Believe me it may be far less than you were thinking.

Communicate the solution, agree and Fix It!

Once you figured out what you are going to do then YOU call them back and tell them the plan of action. Then, with 100% of effort get the problem solved as fast as possible. And, be sure it is done correctly.

Hug them!

Last, do as Ed Mitchell suggested in his book, Hug Your Customers, give them a huh. No not a literal hug but do something extra, give them something to show them how sorry you and the company is. It might be a basket of flowers or a fruit basket but something. And give it to them right away.

If you handle problems when they occur this way you will win them over, gain their respect and they will remain loyal customers, raving fans and maybe even evangelizers! I know it's happened more than once to me!

Let's review.

1. Recognize their problem
2. Acknowledge it
3. Apologize!
4. Own it – Yes you own – the monkey is on your back.
5. Fix it
6. Hug the customer

Lesson #14

Barriers to Extreme Customer Service

Most “green industry” companies have pretty good customer service. But just like Jim Collins said in the first sentence of his book “Good to Great”, “Good is the Enemy of Great”!

Having great customer service is not easy. It takes 100% effort from all in the company and has to be built into the fabric of the culture.

Some of the barriers to customer service revolve around your company's people and systems. To begin with you need to hire people who care, who are friendly and want to offer great customer service. If you people don't care nothing will change. Then, even if you have great people if you don't take the time to educate them on the subject, you're too busy to talk about it, don't create systems within the company for your people to follow, then poor customer service may surely result.

The results of great customer service are obvious, growth, a fun place to work and usually very good profits. So, begin in a systematic way to put the items you have covered in place and enjoy the benefits of raving fans and evangelizers for customers.

Conclusion:

List three things you can implement in your company NOW to start down the road to Building Fiercely Loyal Customers .

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Books:

- Raving Fans by Ken Blanchard
- Over Promise Over Deliver by Rick Barrera
- Delivering Happiness by Tony Hsieh (pronounced Shay)
- I Love You More than My Dog : Jeanne Bliss

Some additional questions to ask yourselves

From: Over Promise Over deliver by Rick Barrera

HOW IS YOUR CUSTOMER SERVICE?

1. I anticipate my customer's needs?
2. I know who my best customers are?
3. I know why customers buy from our company?
4. I hold regular feedback sessions with my customers?
5. I understand how my customers make the decision to buy?
6. I always keep my customers well-informed?
7. I understand the benefits my customers receive from our services?
8. I promote an X-treme customer culture by setting the example?
9. I thoroughly prepare for customer meetings?
10. I make good use of electronic communications in serving my customers?

11. I see any complaints as an opportunity?
12. I keep detailed records of any complaints?
13. I challenge my teams to suggest improvements for our customers?
14. I listen very carefully to my customers?
15. Close to 80% of my work comes from referrals?
16. My customers become my friends?
17. I record customer information on a profile sheet or computer program?
18. I have a great customer service attitude?
19. I know exactly how to deal with angry customers?
20. I always think about and look for ways to delight and surprise my customers?
21. I retain at least 95% of my customer base each year?
22. I receive compliments, notes and letters about our great service?
23. I use personal notes to thank my customers and show I appreciate them?
24. I call my customers back within 8 working hours?
25. I am honest with my customers and never promise what I can't deliver?
26. When we lose a job find out why?