

Business Profile

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An Interview with

Dr. Robin J. Henderson

Owner of Studio
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J. Henderson DDS



**Nat'l Business
Women's Week**

BP SPECIAL EDITION

Revising outstanding customer service

The concept of delivering exceptional customer service is one that should be front and center in our everyday business activities. It is almost impossible to emphasize it, discuss it and educate regarding it too much. As business owners, it is easy to mire down in the daily operations and even get a little complacent. We have to try to not shy away from doing the difficult things. One of those difficult things is honestly evaluating the level of customer service our organization is providing. More specifically, we have to evaluate whether or not we have laid the groundwork for truly outstanding customer service to flourish in our organization.

Statistics show only 1 out of 20 unhappy customers will actually complain to you about the level of service they received. The other 19 will simply walk out, never return and share this not-so-flattering story with all their friends. We can't afford



COMMENTARY

Rene' Johnston-Gingrich

to have unhappy customers, and we can't always rely on receiving their feedback to measure performance.

There are five cornerstones we can examine to ensure outstanding customer service is really a part of our organizational culture.

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Some supervisors are better at employee evaluations than others

"I want to see you in my office in just a few minutes," my manager told me when he passed my desk one morning.

I immediately remembered being sent to the principal's office in grade school for a small infraction and being scolded. My body started to tense up, the fear of the unknown jump-started my emotions like I had been plugged into a 220 outlet. I just knew my job was going to be cut or I was going to get reamed for breaking some rule I didn't even know existed (those hidden rules are the ones that get you). It was time for the six month evalu-



COMMENTARY

Darlene Larson

ation of my job performance. Employee performance evaluations are objective tools employers use to

determine whether you are meeting the requirements of the job you were hired to do. Some employers are good at it, some aren't. So you need to do your part to blow your own horn. Keep track of your accomplishments and areas that need improvement. Keep a written log of what tasks or projects you completed, skills you learned, comments made by your supervisors on the quality of your work and a copy of your timecard.

The evaluation should stick to those tasks or skills assigned to you. You can redirect any non-job related comments to the goals or

tasks you were assigned and how you did them. Be honest. Did you carry out your assigned work effectively and efficiently without constant supervision, or do you still need some training to become skilled and faster?

This process reveals an employee's success or failure on the job and must be written down so that both of you can use that focus. Ask up front what standard is used to decide if or how you will get a raise or other compensation. This decision-making process should be given to

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GINGRICH

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Training

How often is the importance of providing outstanding customer service discussed within your organization? Do you hold structured trainings that educate members on how to best communicate, deal with conflict and establish long-term customer relationships?

Follow Up And Follow Through

Once customer service training is implemented, what is the follow up like? It is important to follow up and monitor. Unfortunately, after many trainings and work-

shops on customer service there is an initial phase of implementation but often a lack of follow through to keep business momentum really flowing.

Consistency

There are organizations out there we hope to emulate, organizations that strive and succeed in providing consistently superior customer service. However, organizational leadership, management and employees need to understand this is something to be attained not just some of the time but all of the time.

Walking the Walk

What do your organization's policies and procedures say about the value placed on delivering out-

standing service? Do they reinforce that ideal? Do your mission and values statements paint a clear picture of how crucial it is to the organization's success and how every member of the organization will be held accountable to those high standards? Revisit these important business foundations to ensure you're creating customer evangelists who sing your praises.

Responsiveness

How quickly are you and your team responding to customer demand? Did you bring in the product customers have been asking for over and over again? Are you reaching out on social media to make your organization as accessible as possible to customers? It is shocking today to find out how many organizations don't have a website

or they do have one but it is not exactly user-friendly.

In an ever-changing market, it is not enough to provide adequate service. Customers today are extremely mobile and web savvy. As business owners and managers, we have to take a hard look at the foundations we have put in place. We have to be vigilant if we want to keep our customers. By evaluating the five key areas we've reviewed you can create loyal, satisfied customers who increase your business via word of mouth.

Johnston-Gingrich has been a business owner in the Lewis-Clark Valley for more than 15 years. She works as an independent trainer and consultant and is an adjunct faculty member with Lewis-Clark State College's business division. She may be contacted through her website at www.rjitac.com