

## Service That Sells

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**H**ow do you respond to good service from those with whom you do business? Do you let them know how much you appreciate what they have done for you? Or do you only respond to problems and negative situations when they arise? Maybe you've found yourself writing a few more congratulatory notes (as well as complaint letters) than you used to?

In general, consumers are becoming more vocal in expressing their attitudes toward the people they give their money. If they get good or bad service from you, they'll let you know. And, when you run a business, there's nothing better than receiving a complimentary letter from a satisfied client because you did what you said you were going to do. By the same token, it's very disturbing to get a letter of complaint telling you what a bad job you've done or a letter that only focuses on the one minor problem you had with their job.

If you feel you've been receiving more than your fair share of complaints or if you simply want to take your customer service to the next level, here are some facts that should inspire you.

- For every client who bothers to complain, there are 26 others who remain silent.
- The average "wronged" client will tell 8 to 16 other people. Over 10% will tell more than 20 people.
- 91% of unhappy clients will never purchase goods or services from you again.
- If you make an effort to remedy complaints, 82% to 95% of the complaining clients will stay with you.
- It costs about five times as much to attract a new client as to keep an old one.

Do you encourage response from your clients? Do you have some kind of form that says, "Let us know how we are doing"? Unless you hear from them – whether a compliment or a complaint – how will you know the truth about the way they feel and what they think about the work you did for them?

### The Three Components of Effective Client Service

As you can see, satisfying your clients is good business. But how do you do it? There are three key components to effective client service: **knowledge, skill, and attitude**. Everyone in your organization needs to be knowledgeable about your products and services. Take a hard look at your knowledge level and that of your staff. If it is insufficient, you won't be able to meet the needs of your clients or come up with solutions for problems. Knowledge also gives you and your staff confidence, which in turn leads clients to have more confidence in you. The result is more successful experiences with your clients.

The second critical area of client service is skill – the skill to handle people professionally and courteously while providing a quality product or service. The Golden Rule applies here. Treat your clients the way you would want to be treated. You need to create an atmosphere that makes your clients want to deal with you on a continuing basis. You can't afford to have an unskilled and untrained staff. Teaching your employees how to work with your clients will also build their confidence.

Attitude is the third component. How do you feel about what you do? What's your outlook? A positive attitude about who you are and what you do inspires others. It inspires your clients to have confidence in you and it inspires those who work with you to work just a little harder.

How do you honestly feel about your clients? Do you feel the same way about them as you do about other people who are important in your life?

Imagine for a moment that a VIP, say a famous movie star, a captain of an industry, or the governor of your state, were coming to your office for a visit. What would you do differently? Would you....

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clean the place up a little better? Would you put forth extra effort? Would your trucks and equipment look cleaner and more professional? If so,