

WOW Customer Service: You Never Get a Second Chance to Make a SECOND Impression!

by Sandy Geroux

We've all heard the saying that "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." However, in the world of customer service (and its important partner, sales), it's often not about the first impression... it's about the second, a.k.a. the follow-up!

The truth is that most sales and customer service professionals do not fall down on the first impression. In sales, we go to networking events and put on our "game day" face. We're great at talking to people, getting them interested in what we have to offer. We craft "elevator speeches" and fun, memorable "positioning statements"... and then, when we've hooked someone and gotten them interested in doing business with us, we choke! Because the deal isn't sealed right there on the spot (what deals are?), we forget how important the follow-up is.

In customer service, we answer the phone and put on our "game day" voice, politely, cheerfully and respectfully, but if we can't fix their problem immediately on that first call, we also choke! We transfer them, make them repeat their problems, promise calls back... but then never make them - forcing customers to call back and start the process over and over again - until it's finally resolved through *their* diligent efforts (not *ours*) or they leave.

There are many reasons why these follow-up failures occur:

1. We lose or somehow misplace their contact information and can't call them (or we can't even remember that someone wanted us to call them).
2. We forget to call them, as day after day after day "gets away from us" because we're so overloaded that we can't keep up.
3. We pass the information along to a co-worker whom we trust to get back to the person, but they don't do it - and we never follow up to see if it was done.
4. We don't check our e-mail or voicemail for days (or weeks), and let leads go stale.
5. We get sick and can't get back to them because we're a one-person shop - and we just can't do anything when we get sick.
6. In large call centers, often customers can't call us back personally since the organization is so large. When they do call back, they have to speak to whomever answers that day - and hope that the previous representative made complete notes in the file.

Whatever the reason - one of the above or a plethora of others - does it really matter? Do customers care about our overload, illness, or technological issues? No. In fact, if we can't even take care of them while we're trying to earn their business, they (rightfully) wonder how they'll be treated once we have it! The harm to our reputation and our business caused by falling down on this most important "WOW" opportunity is often irreparable.



The bigger point is that by WOWing potential customers on the first contact, we have actually set the stage for (and made an "implied promise" of) just as good an experience on the second one - maybe even better! If that "promise" is broken, the potential customer becomes even more disenchanted than if they'd never met, spoken with, or otherwise established a relationship with us. This makes the fall even harder when it happens, as they feel betrayed or misled: *"I expect that from strangers, but I don't expect it from people I've connected with."*

If you're going to take all the time and effort (and often expense) of trying to make WOW impressions on people on your first contact with them, make the most of those opportunities! Put backup plans (and people) in place to take over if you're sick, on vacation, or incapacitated; use technology to help you be more organized and productive; use "tickler" systems to help you remember when to follow up - and with whom; make notes so others can handle the situation if necessary - and so you can remember what's been done. All these little steps add up to one big WOW experience!

Make the most of those precious opportunities to connect face-to-face, voice-to-voice, and heart-to-heart... just don't "break their hearts" by forgetting to WOW them as much on subsequent contact opportunities as you did on the first one!

With over 27 years of speaking and training experience, national speaker and author Sandy Geroux delivers motivational and educational programs to help "Turn Your Workplace Into a WOWplace™", helping organizations create WOW experiences for customers and employees alike by fostering a culture of trust, compassion and commitment to values, service and respect. <http://www.thewowplace.com> or contact sandy@thewowplace.com or call 407-856-1188.

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3760 Manteo Circle Orlando, FL 32837 P (407) 856.1188 E sandy@thewowplace.com W TheWowPlace.com

