

Miserable Moments

by Judi Moreo

A woman received a gift basket from a supplier as a thank you for taking care of a special project. When the gift of dried fruits and nuts arrived, there was a bug crawling around on the inside of the cellophane wrapping. Not wanting to tell the purchaser of the gift that this gift of food with a bug crawling on it was not acceptable, the woman called the company from which the basket had been purchased. Upon relating the situation to the store manager, the manager replied, "That's impossible. I packed it myself". She not only didn't do anything to rectify the situation, she didn't even apologize.

This is what we call a "Miserable Moment." Actually, there were several "Miserable Moments" within the situation. There was the bug crawling on the food causing disappointment regarding the arrival of the gift. There was the anxiety of whether to call the supplier or the company from which the gift was purchased or both. Then there was the rude comment from the manager which felt almost like a slap in the face.

The store manager had created two unhappy customers....the person sending the gift and the person receiving it. When the person receiving the gift told the person who sent the gift, they both decided that neither of them would ever do business with the gift company again. Is it any wonder the gift company went out of business less than a year later? Now, who's having a "Miserable Moment?"

Any contact between a customer and your business when the customer can make a judgment, either positively or negatively, about the service that he or she is receiving will become either a magical moment or a miserable moment for that customer.

If a customer enters your place of business, and finds it to be clean and attractive and he is greeted right away by someone offering to be of assistance, that's the customers' magical moment.

If he enters your premises, finds them dirty, unattractive, and no one acknowledges him or offers to assist, that's a miserable moment.

Upon entering a lighting organization to select fixtures for her new home, a customer came upon three salespeople who just sat staring at her. No one smiled or greeted her in any way. They weren't even talking to each other. They just sat there staring at her. When she asked if they worked in the lighting store, one of them said, "Yes." So she suggested that perhaps he could stand and introduce himself and see how he could assist her. At that point, he turned to the other two and said, "Didn't I tell you when she got out of the car that this one looked like trouble?"

Whoops! Miserable Moment! Moments like these are usually caused by employees who are not particularly interested in helping others. They are just putting in their hours. These people are thinking short term... if they are thinking at all! Just a little extra effort would have kept their customers coming back. Instead, they are actually chasing their customers out of the door and over to their competitors. In addition, they are ruining their own business or that of their employer, because these customers will tell countless numbers of people about the bad experience they had.

Another customer called the service department of her regular automobile dealer to see if she could have her car's air conditioner looked at "sometime in the next week" before making a road trip. She thought it would take only a few minutes to see why it was not blowing cold air. The service clerk advised her that she could only bring the car in if she had an appointment and the earliest appointment he had was in three weeks. He went on to yell at her that his was a busy dealership and she couldn't just bring her car in any time she felt like it. He emphasized that it was all he could do to keep up with the work he had in the shop.

As he obviously didn't need her business because he had "all he could handle now", she took her car to another dealership's service department where they could take a quick look and make a simple adjustment to her air conditioner. Then she continued taking her car there in the future as she "liked the way she was treated." Ahhhh. Magical Moment!

If we all stopped to look at the long term value of our customers, we would probably treat them better than we do. No business can survive for very long without customers coming back over and over again. If customers don't come back and the business doesn't survive, what happens to your job?

On a long term basis, how much is your customer worth to your organization in dollars and cents? Looking at it this way, doesn't it make sense to make every possible effort to keep the customer coming back?

In order to establish the link between your business and your customer, it will be necessary for ALL employees to understand the value of the customer and the part everyone plays in retaining that customer. Research tells us that it is 5 to 6 times more expensive to get a new customer than it is to keep an old one coming back.

What kind of moments are you creating for your customers?

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