

“ACTIONS, NOT WORDS, DETERMINE GREAT SERVICE”



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Listening to the customer, being attentive, and giving great service are not behaviors that you can simply demand of employees. They must be infused into a culture by leadership who have a passion for it, and live it day to day. It is this level of genuine caring about customers that sets any organization apart from its competitors.

This passion to satisfy the customer was something that I recently experienced at the new Target store in Clay. The story shares some best practices for customer service that all companies-not just their competitors- can learn from.

First impressions count. The store was clean, bright, well designed, with attractive merchandizing. The second thing I noticed was that all the shelves were neatly in order. The product offerings were good, and the prices were competitive.

Then came the real test: customer service. I was having difficulty finding a specialty size of clothing for a relative and asked a store associate for assistance. I half expected to have the same response that I was used to getting in other stores: “Sorry, whatever we have on the shelves is all we’ve got.”

To my surprise, the associate responded with sincere concern for my plight. “We are light on stock for that,” he responded knowledgeably. “I have noticed that a considerable number of other customers were requesting the same thing. I have let headquarters know of this in the past, but I will let them know again that this store needs to be assigned a larger stock of these items to accommodate our customer demand.” A direct line from floor to the people who made decisions about the stores – I had read about this concept in contemporary business books, and here it was in action.

My second visit was even more impressive. I was looking for summer chairs that were listed on sale in the weekly promotional flyer, could not find them, and asked an associate for assistance. He could not find them either and used his mobile store communicator to ask another associate to help. She told him the aisle number and then personally came over to make sure that we had found the item. We did find the floor stock but the particular model I wanted was not there.

The woman offered to get what I wanted from the stockroom, and suggested that the first associate, who was less familiar with this department, could move on to assist another customer, which he promptly did. Prior to leaving for the stockroom, she announced over the mobile communicator that she was delayed assisting a “guest” and could someone cover for her to open another register up front.

Within seconds a voice responded, “I’ve got it, Sarah.” She proceeded to find what I was looking for, stayed and set it up to make sure that it was to my satisfaction, re-packaged it and put it into my cart before wishing me a great day and zipping on to assist her next “guest.”

Some companies perpetuate the jargon and give lip service about customer service. Others live it. This experience at Target was living proof of great customer service and genuine teamwork in action.