

## **The Leader: What is World Class?**

by **Frederick E Roach**

We tend to remember world-class customer service! If we think about great hotels, Ritz-Carlton might come to mind. In the retail business, Nordstroms would be high on most lists. When we think about entertainment, Walt Disney World or Disneyland would be a natural.

These reputations are not by accident! It didn't just happen! It required a concentrated effort to provide the best possible service for every one of their customers. We've all heard stories of how a customer might return a pair of shoes to Nordstroms after several years of wear because the stitching was coming loose - and getting a new pair of shoes. In the Magic Kingdom, every employee is considered a customer service representative. One of our friends with Integrity Systems, Bill Jackson, asked for "extra lemon" with his tea at a Ritz-Carlton restaurant. On his next visit, in another city, when he asked for tea - it came with extra lemon.

We have several examples of companies with world-class customer service in Dallas. A short list (it could go on and on) might include Southwest Airlines and Neiman-Marcus. It's been exciting at times to hear Stanley Marcus, or read his articles in the Dallas Morning News, as he describes his philosophy about the care of the customers. In Southwest Airlines, customer service seems to be the "golden thread" that runs throughout the entire organization. For them, it is basic to their culture.

How does an organization build a reputation for excellence in customer service? There's obviously no fixed formula. I like what Frances Smith says in the July issue of "Executive Excellence" magazine. Her answer is to "become irresistible"! She asks, "Have you ever asked your customer, or for that matter, have you ever asked yourself..what makes your company irresistible?"

Frances Smith points out that "Irresistible relationships in business today could mean your survival." Why? Because "customers today have choices. Many choices. We're not the only game in town, and they don't leave us because we're rude. They leave us because we're indifferent." She ended her article with this challenge: "If you desire irresistible relationships with your customers, the idea, philosophy and process need to be injected into the muscle of your company."

### ***ARE THERE SOME BASIC TO EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER SERVICE?***

#### **1. Meet Peoples' Needs**

As customers, we want people to be sensitive to us - to our needs, our desires. Of course, this is what our customers want from us. They want us to be empathetic. They'd like us to follow "The Golden Rule." They would like us to deliver more than we promise.

#### **2. Maintain A Positive Atmosphere**

We create the climate around us! The more positive the atmosphere we create, the easier it becomes to provide excellent customer service. We have the ability within us to create antagonism or a positive relationship with our customers.

#### **3. Create A Lifetime Relationship**



The most successful companies have a "faithful following." There's tremendous value in customer allegiance. Marketers tell us that the cost multiple is much higher to generate new customers than to maintain existing customers.

#### 4. **Go The Extra Mile**

Preeminence requires going beyond the expected. Going the extra mile with customer creates anecdotes with customers that become a part of organizational culture. It is the little things - the special things - that create the positive environment where people feel well served.

#### 5. **Don't Have A Customer Service Department**

Customer service is too important to delegate to a few people. The most successful organizations recognize that every employee is a customer service representative. Our customers want extraordinary service from every Baylor employee they meet.

#### 6. **Maintain Quality Of Service**

People expect quality! To distinguish ourselves among other health care providers the quality of our service must continuously improve. This provides an opportunity for us to be innovative - to separate ourselves from other health care providers.

#### 7. **Remember The Little Things**

Since Baylor is known for its excellence, it will be the little things that our customers will remember the most - and share with their friends and family. It's a safe axiom to assume that the little things in life are of more importance than many larger issues.

#### 8. **Stay Creative- .Fresh**

We do not want to create an army of robots who wander our halls smiling and asking: "How can I help you?" We seek caring employees who reach out to people at their point of need and strive to help them in a pleasant way. Be innovative, creative and upbeat as we serve our customers.

#### 9. **Protect People's Time**

Good customer service is timely! I said to a claims adjuster at State Farm this week: "Thanks for the efficiency of your service and taking care of my need so quickly and positively." Timeliness can be the key to how our customers feel about our service.

#### 10. **Remember Who Pays The Bills**

We recognize that for Baylor, caring for the health of our patients is a ministry. This is what motivates much of our action. Another motivation should be the recognition that we owe our patients great service because they provide the financial means for us to exist!