



Timely Information for Personal Success

Mistakes that Drive Customers Away

By Joseph Michelli

Loyal customers are hard to come by today, but the majority of the ones you lose typically *don't* storm angrily out the door. Rather it's the fact that their experience with your company or organization is less of an enthusiastic *Wow!* – and more of a tepid *Eh*. What's worse, firms usually don't even realize they're making mistakes that are driving customers away. The following are some of them:

❖ **You're chasing new customers at the expense of existing ones.** Consider car dealers that spend huge amounts of money on commercials that scream at people to come in, promising all kinds of perks. What they're *not* spending it on is employee training to make sure that once these customers are in the door they'll come back. The key to business, I think, is being great at both. It costs a lot more to acquire a customer than to retain one, so why not invest more in retention?

❖ **You make your customers work too hard.** Businesses must compete in an increasingly Uberized society. Uber customers simply pull out their phone, push the app, a car pulls up and takes them where they need to go, they are dropped off, no cash is exchanged, and they are done. As people begin to expect this kind of service, business leaders are being forced to find ways to make their customer's experience as effortless, and yet as personal as possible.

There are companies today that will actually gas up your car for you, wash your windows *and* leave a note on the windshield. You can leave work and go straight home to your kids because you're already gassed up.

Never forget how complex life is for customers. Customers leave because we don't think through the effort it requires to do business with us. We don't provide technological solutions. We don't simplify every touchpoint. When business isn't nearly effortless, customers leave. Wouldn't you?

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Healthy Recipe: Loaded Spinach Salad

INGREDIENTS:

- 8 large eggs
- 6 cups baby spinach
- 4 tablespoons blue cheese dressing
- 1 eight-ounce can beets, rinsed, sliced
- 1 cup carrots, shredded
- 2 tablespoons chopped pecans, toasted (see tip)

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

- Calories per serving: 300
- Carbohydrates: 26 g.
- Protein: 22 g.
- Sodium: 823 mg.
- Saturated fat: 3 g.
- Fiber: 8 g.

DIRECTIONS:

❶ Place eggs in single layer in saucepan and cover with water. Simmer over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook for 10 minutes. Pour off hot water and run cold water over eggs until cooled.

❷ Peel eggs, discard 6 of the yolks, chop remaining yolks and whites. Toss spinach and 2 tablespoons dressing in large bowl. Divide between 2 plates.

❸ Top with chopped eggs, beets, carrots, and pecans. Drizzle with remaining dressing. Tip: To toast pecans, cook in small skillet over medium-low heat, stirring constantly until lightly browned, 2-4 minutes.

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Questions and Answers

Becoming a Better Speaker

Q: *I have to travel periodically to put on workshops, and while I know the subject matter, I'm not a very engaging speaker. What can I do?*

A: The best advice I can suggest is to practice. Public speaking doesn't come easily for many of us, but there are scores of ways of gaining experience. I've been a lecturer at our church for a number of years, and I served as secretary and president of a local Lions club. Each of these endeavors helped me gain confidence speaking before an audience. Like anything, the more you do it, the better you get at it.

Other possibilities include enrolling in a public speech class or joining the Toastmasters, a nonprofit organization that develops public speaking and leadership skills through practice and feedback. See <http://www.toastmasters.org>. These are great ways of finding out what other people think about your presentation skills before you head to your next destination and talk.

Source: Mike Jacquart, frequent blogger; LinkedIn contributor; and editor of "Employee Assistance Report."

Mistakes...

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❖ **You hire the wrong people out of desperation.** We hire too quickly because we just want to fill a position; any warm body will do. Not only shouldn't you "settle", you need to *train* employees to connect on a human level. This is not about scripting but about helping employees realize what customers really want and need, and then empowering them to provide it.

❖ **You end transactions at the money exchange.** Too many businesses close the deal and that's the end of the relationship. There is an enormous opportunity for employees to re-engage with the customer — to really show appreciation, an eagerness to serve them again.

Godiva does a great job of re-engaging customers. Their employees will put the chocolate in a lovely bag, hand it to the customer, and often they'll say, "*Hey, we've got another product coming out that you may enjoy.*" They create an invitation to return, and that's incredibly powerful. This is what happens with firms that really get it, as opposed to the more typical, "*Thanks, have a nice day.*"

Summary

We all make mistakes in dealing with customers, but your culture needs to be built on a sincere desire, if not obsession, to delight the customer. ■

Joseph A. Michelli, PhD, CSP, is an internationally sought-after speaker, organizational consultant, and author of Driven to Delight: Delivering World-Class Customer Experience the Mercedes-Benz Way (McGraw-Hill; December 2015; ISBN: 978-0-07-180630-5; \$27.00). For more information visit www.josephmichelli.com.