

Take the One-and-Done Approach

My all-time favorite saying is, "There are those who say they can, and there are those who say they can't. Guess what? They are both right."

I recently spoke to a group of dry cleaners about customer expectations. As part of my presentation, I used data from Convergys, a customer management firm. The 2011 report is one in a series of customer satisfaction surveys they conduct.



Carolyn Nankervis

This most recent one indicates that customers are measuring their satisfaction based on the amount of effort it takes to complete a transaction.

What are the top reasons why customers say they are not satisfied? It's needing multiple attempts to resolve an issue (40%), issue resolution taking too long (35%) and having to repeat information (34%).

Other problem areas identified were rude, unhelpful employees (23%); no employee follow-through (20%), and employees not being empowered to meet customer needs (20%).

I have often stated that customer satisfaction in the dry cleaning business isn't about the cleaning process, it's about how your staff reacts to your customer. Your employees have two opportunities to get it right: at drop-off

and at pick-up.

Take a look at the reasons on the list. Now, review how your customer service representatives and managers are trained to handle complaints and claims. Are they able to resolve the situation with one interaction with the customer? If not, how long does it take to finalize a claim?

Do your newer employees have the ability to make decisions, or do they subject your customer to the "round-about" theory of complaint resolution? How many people must sign off?

How do you communicate with the customer? "Millennials" (age 20-30) are your new customers. They have grown up using e-mail, Foursquare, Facebook and Twitter. They expect nearly instantaneous response time. Be sure you focus your interactions with them using a variety of different channels, and make it fast.

Repeating information is my pet peeve. If I have taken the time to come into the store, call on the phone, and e-mail the information, I am attempting to get the issue resolved with the least amount of time/energy/effort. One and done works for me. Telling my story one time is not fun, and telling my story multiple times is aggravating and raises my blood pressure. I'm certain I'm not alone.

One and done applies to your busi-

ness, too. One of our clients recently had a claim filed by a customer who said he had received the wrong suit. He told the CSR he brought in an Italian designer suit but was given a bargain-brand suit when he picked up. Upon inspection of the store video, the cleaner was able to identify the inside label on the suit that was dropped off; the suit that was picked up had the same label. The claim was avoided, and the customer was "busted." One and done can also reduce stress and strain on your personnel.

We perform "remote" mystery shopping—remotely accessing store audio and video to review it—for one of our clients. Recently, we reviewed a shopping experience at a dry store. The CSR looked at the item before asking the customer, "Can this be dry cleaned?" The customer located the care label and stated, "Yes, it can." The CSR looked at the item again, then told the customer she should take it to the main plant to ensure that they would clean it

properly. It's amazing to me that the customer actually agreed to drive across town.

That transaction leaves me wondering if the cleaner will ever see that customer again. This is not a one-and-done moment. Whose responsibility is it to get clothes clean? The customer? I think not.

My four key elements for streamlined customer interactions are:

1. Easy interactions at the counter
2. Minimum customer effort
3. Quick action on problems
4. Multiple channels of communication

Think of customer effort as this equation: ease of customer effort equals satisfaction equals loyalty equals bottom-line results. ○

Carolyn B. Nankervis is president of MarketWise Consulting Group, Appleton, Wis. A former director of marketing, sports writer, radio announcer and TV producer, she is a frequent speaker on customer service and marketing topics. She can be reached at carolyn.nankervis@marketwi.com, 902-735-4970.

