

Principle 30

Making It Easy To Do Business With You

*It should be a key consideration
for all business*

I know an old marketing phrase that may be a bit hackneyed, but it still rings true. "If you confuse 'em, you lose 'em."

It speaks to the fundamental issue of making it easy for people to do business with you. Let's start with an example from direct marketing sales letters. Perhaps more sales are lost in direct mail pieces by the order form than anything else. If it's difficult to fill out, if it's confusing in even simple ways, chances are that people will just toss it aside and forget about it. A simple test to perform after completing the design of an order form is to give it to a third party and have them fill it out - a process that almost always uncovers potential problems that can be deceptively hard to spot otherwise.

Making it easy to do business with you applies to all levels of what you do, starting right up front with the basics, for instance if you own a store:

- How easy is your store to find on the street?
- How easy it to find things in your store and on your shelves?
- Are your sales staff prepared to answer all likely questions quickly and clearly.
- Is the first person who answers the phone ready to direct calls to just the right source?
- Do you follow-up quickly on questions and concerns posed by clients?
- Do you use a freephone number, or do customers have to pay to call you, even to just ask a question or place an order.

Remember, your customers are not mind readers. Never assume they are "just going to know" how to take action to buy from you, or that they'll automatically go to the right department, or fill out the right form, and send it to the right address or department.

Staff need to be trained and monitored to ensure outstanding customer service

Your staff needs extensive training in knowing what the most likely needs and problems of your customers are going to be, and your staff should know exactly what to do, where to direct, and how to answer all likely questions. Employees should also maintain "the right attitude" and understand that their goal is to present a positive, eager attitude. Your employees should smile - yes, it's important. Customers must clearly get the idea: "This person

understands me and is doing all he or she can to help me, and they enjoy helping me." And, "I like these people they are nice to do business with".

Don't just train your employees, but monitor the results. Listen to how your employees answer the phone and observe how they interact with customers. Without spying, make sure their functions and attitudes are conveying the company message. Hold employee meetings and encourage them to give feedback to you and each other to make sure everyone is on the same page and understands your company's basic mission - to help people and to sell your product.

It may be a bit cliché, but it's still true: First impressions tend to be the most lasting impressions. That's why the person who answers the phone, or the person of first contact is so important. A secretary who does no selling but who answers the phone first and is responsible for directing calls is the first link in a chain of people who must all work together to provide top-notch service to all who make contact with your organisation.

Simple things like putting people on hold, making them wait too long in line, or having to endure a salesperson who doesn't know exactly what he or she is doing can all be sales killers. It can project an image of your total operation as being difficult to do business with.

Does your place of business look "approachable?" Studies show that the average customer takes just 8 seconds to decide if they are going to stay and go further into your store, or just walk right back out. If they come in and see a dark and disorganised mess, it's easy to lose them just like that. Even the look of your car park - full of litter, not well lit, or worse - can cause people to just keep driving, rather than stop in.

Making it easy for customers to do business with you is not rocket science - but doing the basic, simple things can be deceptively easy to forget. Your key is to always look at your business through the eyes of a potential customer. The key for your employees is training. Always tell them and yourself:

- It's impossible to provide too much service.
- Always be open, informative and approachable.
- Be obsessive about following-up with customers.
- Make the details of ordering and buying super easy.
- Buying is as much an EXPERIENCE for customers as it is about the shopping.

Make that experience not only easy and fun, but a pleasure to perform, and you have the key to business success.