

module one: customer service

Greetings and First Impressions

article:

Stand Out in Your Marketplace

Deliver a noteworthy experience, make extras count, and provide value added benefits.

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You achieve a unique stamp in your marketplace by delivering a noteworthy guest experience, making extras count without a doubt, and providing value added benefits to your offerings.

Deliver a Noteworthy Experience

Think of an experience where you felt the customer service was worth talking about. Mine was at a bed and breakfast in Madison, Wisconsin in 1990. It remains noteworthy to this day. The service was impressive starting with the first call to book a room. Friends referred my husband and me so when I called, I mentioned my friend to the owner. She not only remembered my friend by name but also complimented his wife.

When I called, I mentioned that I was looking for a quiet getaway with a water view. Later, when we checked in, the owner referenced my request before leading us to the top floor suite overlooking the lake. She remembered what was important and referenced it. At the conclusion of my initial call, she asked for our favorite beverages and if we had any food allergies. When we arrived, we found a welcome basket in our room. It was filled with our favorite beverages on ice along with brochures of sites to see and shops to explore in town, a calendar of events, and a map of the area. What an amazing first impression!

Impressive hospitality continued with room service. Before we went to our room for the evening, the owner asked us when we would like breakfast delivered to our room. Room delivery meant we didn't have to shower, dress, and go downstairs to make small talk with strangers. At 8:00 a.m., the next morning we heard a light tapping on our door. The sweetest voice said, "Your breakfast is outside the door when you're ready." I opened the door to find a cart with fresh flowers and a taste-tempting display of breakfast food. After our stay, I received a handwritten note in the mail thanking us for the business and requesting that, if we enjoyed our stay, we would tell others about the little slice of heaven in Madison. That's what she called it. That's how I felt about it.

When you peel away the little things, it was just a bed and breakfast stay. The special touches made a huge impact. They are the reason I am still talking about it over twenty years later. What could you do in your business to up the experience to noteworthy? Are there things you once did that have somehow gone by the wayside? Is it time to dust the ideas off and bring them back?

Make Extras Count

I know a breakfast shop that gives us two doughnut holes free with every purchase. My car dealership runs the vehicles through the car wash with every service, and they have popcorn and soda fountain drinks that I can help myself to while I wait. What about the hotel that has fresh baked cookies waiting upon my arrival or free high-speed WiFi? In fact, I have reached the point where I choose my hotel based on the WiFi options. Do you offer any little extras with your product or service?

Do not make the mistake of failing to let your guests know when you offer something extra. For example, I know an attorney and an accountant who often choose to reduce their fee a little bit as a courtesy to certain clients. For instance, if the bill is supposed to be \$850, they might mark it down to \$700. However, when they send the invoice, it just reads \$700. Show the fee for the service of \$850 with a single line through it and \$700 written next to it. Then underneath, provide a short explanation for the reduction: courtesy discount or whatever the reason might be. If you're adding extras, but you're not letting the client know you've done something special, it defeats the purpose.

Provide Value Added Benefits

Value add is one step above the little extra. My bank provides a great example of value add. I have six banks in my community, and I choose the one closest to my house. They offer the same banking service as everyone else and claim to have great customer service just like all the others. However, the value add that I like about my bank is that one teller lane is a dedicated mail services area. Our post office is on the opposite end of town from my home and bank. When I need to mail things, I no longer have to drive to the other end of town. What can you create as value add for your guests?

Deliver a noteworthy experience, make extras count, and provide value added benefits. Dig deep to stand out in your marketplace.