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Debbie Mayo-Smith: Get customer service to show you the money

3:45 AM Monday Nov 9, 2009

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Half your customers will leave you in five years and the customers who have a bad experience with you will tell 13 others about it. These are but two of the statistics quoted by Dr Ian Books in the book we wrote together, 101 Quick Tips: Create A Great Customer Experience.



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I thought of these statistics last Thursday at the MYOB Awesome Service awards. As you would guess, the awards celebrate individuals nominated by their customers for giving them standout service. The website [www.awesomeservice.co.nz](#) offers little vignettes of great service and they are actively looking for nominations throughout the country.

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Director Angie Skerrett puts superb service down to respect – respect for your customers' time, their needs and wants, their wallets.

Getting staff on the right side of customer service should be a no-brainer. It pays off beautifully. When staff give your customers great service, 80 per cent tell an average of nine other people. More than one-third give you more business. And 55 per cent recommend you.

Of equal importance is helping staff understand the steep cost of customers who never return. Share this with them. If a customer spends \$10 with you every month, that's \$120 a year.

If they stayed with you for 10 years, they would spend \$1200. But if they left after the first year, you would lose out on \$1080 (nine years @ \$120 pa).

Great service does not rely on staff alone. Business processes can make a world of difference. The most helpful checkout teller at the supermarket can't overcome the fact that you've just stood in line for half an hour.

How many of us like having petrol stations operate in lockdown mode until we go in and prepay? Why aren't there more staff at movies to handle popcorn and candy orders?

I think one process requiring further thought is the focus on pushing customers to go online to help themselves. To purchase. To solve their own problems. To renew or reorder.

The question begs to be asked: where's the service in this? Don't take me wrong: I'm a huge fan of everything online. It's the most marvellous convenience to be able to help yourself when you want. But what if you don't want to? Removing service and prompting, sometimes forcing customers to DIY, can result in lost sales. The larger the company, the more significant the income loss.

Is it the correct assumption that when customers are in a buying rather than fact-finding mode, every one of them will have the time or

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technical skills to navigate through the website? I ne time to read about different model options; to make choices; to have confidence to pay online? How many just leave the site? An easy solution is to have the phrase "Questions call us now" with a phone number prominently displayed along the web sales process path.

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