

Chris's Corner: The Customer is Always Right

I am not feeling too creative this month, so I am not going to go off on some esoteric philosophical rant. Instead, I am going to focus on a universal truth in business; "the customer is always right."

Seriously, is the customer always right? From where I am standing the answer is a resounding, yes!

What exactly does this mean? To me, it means that if you have an issue you need to resolve with the customer, it means you have to resolve it. You don't tell the customer they're wrong, you don't try to outsmart them; you take your medicine.

Many, many times all that is necessary to clear up any issues, whether in business or life, is to calmly discuss the issue. Let the other person speak their full piece and listen, intently, to what they're saying. Don't let your monkey mind get distracted and think of your rebuttal. Just listen.

Once the customer, or whomever, has had their say, repeat what they said to you back to them and ask, " am I understanding what you said?" Exchange in a back and forth exchange, with no agenda other than mutual understanding.

Then, and only then, you can choose how to respond. Perhaps the issue is clearly a misunderstanding; clear it up. However, once you've cleared up the misunderstanding, take responsibility for the miscommunication and apologize for the misunderstanding. Explain to the customer that in the future, you and your employees will offer better, clearer communications and solicit feedback from the customer proactively, to make sure there is no misunderstanding through the entire business transaction.

Often times, we, here at Hefner Food Equipment, will make it a point to change our policies and procedures that are inherently confusing to the customer and make it difficult to do business with us. We want it easy to do business with us, not confusing.

Once the issue is cleared up, we take it upon ourselves to say to the customer, “Mr. or Mrs. Customer we are sorry for the misunderstanding, we understand how it happened and we will work hard that it doesn’t happen again.”

Next, and most importantly, we are not afraid to say, actually we are eager, “What can we do to make it right for you? How can we make it up to you?”

A lot of people new to business are afraid of those very words. They ignorantly assume we do business in a crooked world with crooked people and I simply know from experience that is not the case. Ask, “How can we make it right?”

It comes as no surprise to me, that many more times than not, what the customer wants is much less than you are willing to give in the first place. People are reasonable, show that you trust them and they will implicitly trust you.

New flash, there is no fast buck in business. To be moderately successful you have to be willing to engage your customers and take care of them. Business is built upon relationships and the best business relationships are a two way street.

You take care of your customer, because your customer is always right and they will beat a path to your door. Plus you will EARN the reputation of being an honest, customer oriented business person.

Being 100% oriented to the customer is the greatest way to last in business.

Some of you may be thinking, not everyone is honest, not everyone is reasonable. Well for that less than 1% of your customers that might constantly try to take advantage of you, the best advice I can give you is kill them with kindness. Don’t be selective; treat everyone great. Eventually you will win over even the most difficult of people. Once they know you’re the real deal, they will treat you in kind and often times, they will treat you even better, because they’re kicking themselves for trying to take advantage of a good person in the first place.

It’s not hard, be the kind of person that you would want to do business with; period.

