

Chris's Corner: Beyond Our Control

I remember when I started in this business 30 years ago, the stress and agitation of having to deal with situations in which a customer calls and wants a service technician dispatched to their facility immediately and having no one available.

I say, I remember because I no longer get stressed about these relatively rare situations.

This isn't because offering superior customer service is no longer a priority or that I have lost my customer oriented focus, but due to the realization that sometimes things occur that are beyond your control and there isn't a solution to the problem.

I say sincerely if all my techs are on jobs and if a customer calls wanting instant service, no matter how great of a customer they are if you don't have a man free then and there, you have to tell the customer they are going to have to wait a while.

You under no circumstances would ever pull a tech off a job they're currently on to go somewhere else; period.

Bearing this in mind, it is the next step that is most critical, the triage and prioritization that determines the shuffling of the call list.

You have to quickly look and determine where in the list of open calls you need to get to, where the demanding customer fits in. This is determined the severity of the issue, the likelihood of a first call completion, how good or regular of a customer they are, etc.

Then you have to openly and honestly appraise the customer of the situation and realistically give them a time frame and/or premium

options to expedite the visit. In most instances, if we can't be there during regular hours and the customer is insistent, we are talking about overtime; either after hours or weekends.

This option often times is an unrealistic option if we are talking about a competitive brand, as opposed to a main brand for us. We stock some competitive parts but due to the wide array of brands and products we work on, we typically don't have the part in stock. We can get it quick, but not same day. So if we are faced with the situation where we can get a guy there, but not running on the initial call, we recommend the customer to save the money and wait until the first available regular hours call. If we have to order a part Friday night or Monday at 9:00 am, they won't be here until Tuesday regardless, so why take a person's money for the same outcome?

Regardless of the situation, I no longer take these crisis situations to heart. We can only do what we can do. The most important thing we can offer our customers is guidance on what they should do considering the situation at hand and in the future.

In regards to potential future situations we continually hammer home the idea to act preemptively if there is a problem. Machines don't heal themselves. Issues don't magically go away, they get worse and end up being expensive in repair cost, down time, etc.

Deal with issues when you notice them and you and I won't ever, if rarely, find ourselves at this crossroads. If we do, I assure I can't and won't allow myself to stress over a done situation; instead I will deal with the situation as it is and do the absolute best I can and my company can to remedy it.

