

ENTERPRISING RURAL FAMILIES



An Online Newsletter

Volume XIII, Issue 12

December 2017

No Need for Grinch Service During the Holiday Season

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The holiday season is in full swing which means shoppers are busy too! In a time where there is Black Friday, Shop Local Saturday, and Cyber Monday consumers have ample opportunities to score big savings and deals on sale items. For retail



stores this time of year is very important and however, deals are not going to be enough to attract and create

consumer loyalty. Retail managers who can not only provide savvy deals but also deliver exceptional customer service will be more likely to retain customers through out the year. "In order to shine amidst the clutter of promotions and maximize your holiday efforts, your support team needs to provide superior customer service," salesforce.com, 2013.

According to Desk.com whom interviewed a variety of top sale's managers to gather the best tips for providing quality customer service during the holiday six effective strategies were identified.

1. Plan A Head

Preparations for the holiday season should begin at least three months in advance. Preparations include adequate staffing, capable and knowledgeable employees (employee training may need to be conducted), and adjust employee schedules to meet the demands of the store. Retail managers should look at previous store history to forecast the upcoming season. Items to pay attention to when looking at reports include: workflows from past season, recognize your past years' customer satisfaction ratings and make a educated decision on whether to hire seasonal help or cross train employees.

2. Triaging Customer Interactions

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Managers need to create an effective and efficient process for support staff to handle customer cases. “Triaging cases as they come in allows you divide and conquer your



case load by having the right cases, assigned to the right teams, right away. By gauging the urgency of a case and correctly categorizing it by the type of help the customer needs, you’re

ensuring the right agents are handling the customer’s question, salesforce.com. Having a organized plan and process helps eliminate customer frustration as well as helps employees provide quality customer service because everyone knows the plan is aware of the process.

3. Improve Self Service Support

To help eliminate the high volumes of inquires and increased emotional outburst that occur during the holiday season it is recommended that when possible allow customers the opportunity to help the selves. “According to Forrester, 72% of customers prefer self-service to resolve their support issues over picking up the phone or sending an email, salesforce.com.” Consider the needs of your customers and the frequent questions asked by customers to develop ways to create self-service opportunities.



4. Empowerment

Empower your support staff to have the confidence and ability to handle any situation the may arise. Preparing employees for potential situations will help them feel comfortable dealing with disgruntled customers. According to salesforce.com “by giving agents trust and confidence to make their own judgment, they will be able to deliver a fast, personalized customer experience without having to jump through any hoops. A team of support agents that deliver a fun and fast customer experience has the potential to be a huge competitive advantage during the holidays.”

Desk.com interviewed Senior Support Manager, Cole Sickler about his company’s ability to provide successful customer service “By empowering our staff to do whatever they want to satisfy a customer they can jump to a workable solution immediately without having to get clearance or jump through any hoops.”

5. Focus on Fast Resolution Times

Setting goals to reach customers as soon as possible is always a good strategy and creates for happy customers. It is recommended that you review your mechanism to reach your customers (in person, phone, e-mail etc.) and your response time to each mechanism to maintain quality service in timely matter.

6. Activate Whole Company Support

Rather than hiring temporary help for the holiday season consider cross training employees/colleagues. “Whole company support provides more personnel that

require little training as well as allows your system to be more resilient to the stress that will undoubtedly be experienced during the peak season.” Furthermore, “with basic training and some guidance, you can stack your support team with more personnel and make sure each customer receives a fast and personal response,” salesforce.com.



Although customer service expectations are heightened during the holiday season these tips and others can be applied year round. Just remember empowered employees create happy consumers.

Source:

<https://www.salesforce.com/blog/2013/11/holiday-rush.html>

Tip of the Month



Usefulness of Lists and the Joy of leaving things undone!

*This is the season with particular care about the making of lists. For we adults there's so many extra things to get done before the Holidays. Young people are concerned about what may be on Santa's list or which side of the naught so nice list their name appears today.

*Creating an efficient to do list is a feat in itself. There's a number of options for list making: a notebook, a desk pad, a commercial to do system, a digital list an app. Whatever system you choose will only be as effective as you are in creating a goal driven doable list.

*I create a list of everything that I'm wanting to get accomplished and then use my adaptation of Franklin Coveys suggestion for reaching goals of sorting one's list into three components. My list is sorted by "A -- must do today"; "B-- needs to done soon" and "C--would be nice to work on". With my system I seldom come to the end of a day with everything finished because my "C - would be nice to work on list" includes sewing and needlework projects that take months to finish.

*The additional events of the holiday season add so many things to our lists. I recently read an article which offered that we can be more effective and productive when we intentionally choose what we'll do and what we'll walk away from. We can live better and lead better when we spend time where it needs to be spent and recognize what doesn't need to happen, or at least doesn't need to happen by us.

*It can feel risky to choose not to do something, especially as we worry that others will notice we've left something undone or unattended. A necessary leadership tool is to thoughtfully choose what we will and won't expend time on in our day, what we'll take care of ourselves, what we'll leave for others or what we could delegate to someone, and here's the big one----what we'll simply leave undone. It's a bit of an art to get things done combining all the personal, professional and civic demands on our time. The real art for all of us is to master the talent of discerning what things need to be done, and what are the right things to leave undone.

*Bill Keane's quote seems appropriate to ponder in light of our 24/7 list making lives. "Yesterday is History, Tomorrow is a mystery, Today is a gift from God, which is why we call it the present."

*May you and yours enjoy a bright and joyfilled Holiday.