Customer Service: From Weak to WOW!

"It is important that we give our customers the service they deserve." - Ken May

Everyone Thinks They Have It

Every store thinks they offer great customer service. From the greeter at Wal-Mart to the Genius Bar at Apple, every retailer is convinced their level of customer service is excellent.

Yet every person in America has experienced horrible customer service *(probably within the past week!)*

The purpose of this eBook is to show you the different levels of customer service as we follow a customer through eight common interactions she has with a retail store. You will quickly see where you rank on the **Weak to WOW!** scale and where you can improve.

The Weak to WOW! Scale

Here is how I define the terms to rate the four levels of customer service that a retailer might offer.

Weak: The minimum amount you have to do to even be able to say the words ***customer service***. If you are only at this level, the customer is rolling her eyes, but she's not pissed off (yet).

Good: Slightly above Weak, you are following the letter of the law of customer service if not necessarily the spirit of putting your customers first.

Great: You are trying. You are giving a good, genuine effort toward taking care of the customer and putting her first. You are doing enough to even get a *"Thank you"* from time to time.

WOW!: You get it. You understand that it is all about the customer and her experience. You have put her needs above all else and have made it such an experience she has to tell others about it.

You will not always be able to offer **WOW!** Service. But by seeing the differences, you will know where to focus your efforts for improvement.

The Front Door

The first interaction your customer has with your store is your front door, whether driving into your parking lot, walking by your mall location, or searching for street parking within a block of your store.

Weak: Your store has a sign with your name and some identification of what you might sell that is easily visible to the type of traffic you get.

Good: Your store also includes a window display that gets changed at least once a quarter. And if not located in a mall, your store hours are easily visible to a car driving by.

Great: Your window display gets changed at least monthly. Your front door is handicapped accessible. There is a bright, easily visible **"Open"** sign. The door is open and inviting (or automatic).

WOW!: You offer free Valet Parking during your busy season. Your window displays are the talk of the town. If your door is not automatic, there is someone at the front door holding it open for customers in wheelchairs or pushing strollers. Wonderful scents are coming from the doorway.

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The Greeting

As your customers enter your store, how you greet them sets the tone for the rest of their experience.

Weak: You look up from your station and weakly shout *"Hello!"* to everyone who walks through the door whether you make eye contact or not.

Good: You spice it up with a hearty custom welcome *(and actually mean it!)*

Great: You get out from behind the counter and say, *"Thanks for coming in!"** They chose you over every other retail opportunity. Thank them for that.

WOW!: You offer to hang up their coats. Greet them like a friend. Chat casually with them, not about why they are there but what is happening in their lives. Ask about the previous purchases they have made. You give them all the time they need to decompress and feel comfortable before getting to the business at hand.

Approaching the Customer

She has entered, been greeted and made comfortable. Now you are ready to engage with her about business.

Weak: You ask her, *"Can I help you?"* She responds, *"Just looking."* You answer back, *"Let me know if you have a question,"* and walk away. We call that the Retail Two-Step Backwards.

Good: You say *"Hello, how are you? What can I help you find?"* A little more specific than the horribly generic, "*Can I help you*?" but still nothing more than a cursory question that gets little positive response from anyone other than the highly motivated customers.

Great: You greet the customer by name, or if you don't know her name, you introduce yourself. After pleasantries, you ask her, *"What brings you in today?"*

WOW!: You greet her by name, talk about her kids or grandkids, treat her like your best friend. Or if you don't know her, you observe her behavior to find clues about her interests and engage her about those interests. People love to talk about the things that interest them. You do not have to ask what brings her in because in the course of the conversation she has already told you.

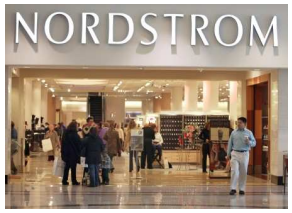
Selling the Customer

At the end of the day you still have to make a sale. You still have to interact with the customer to get merchandise in her hands and make her want to buy it.

Weak: You ask her what she wants and point her in the general direction of the product she requests.

Good: You lead her to the products and wait to see if she has any other questions.

Great: While leading her to the products you ask questions to find out why she wants this product and how it will be used. You use that information to suggest other products that might work better showing her not just the features of each product but how each feature will benefit her.



WOW!: On top of that you limit her choices to the two or three best options to make the decision easier. You also complete the sale by making sure she has everything she might possibly need to go with the option she chooses.

From Rick Segal's book* *"The Retail Sales Bible"***

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Closing the Sale

You have shown her the products. She has picked out what she wants. Now you need to close the sale, get her to the checkout and collect her money.

Weak: You ask, *"Will that be all?"* At least you have asked an assumptive question and put the thought in her head that she is buying what is in her hands at the minimum.

Good: You ask, *"Can I take those items up to checkout for you?"* This frees her hands for more browsing and buying. Be sure that you return to her after you place the items at checkout.

Great: After taking her items up front and returning to her, you ask, *"Is there anything else you need (or I can do for you)?"* This gives her a chance to ask for help with your services or other products, again placing the assumption that she is buying what you took to checkout.

WOW!: You offer specific suggestions for other products or services that compliment her purchase. You reinforce her choices with compliments and reassurance that she made a good choice. You give her tips and suggestions that will make the purchases even better such as creative and innovative ways to use the products more efficiently.

Plus, you thank her for the opportunity to help her.

Plus, you carry her items up to checkout, introduce her to the checkout clerk (if it is not you) and get her contact info and purchase information for your *Special Customers* book.

The Checkout

You have closed the sale. She is at the checkout. You can still make an impact with customer service.

At the absolute minimum she expects the cashier to be able to process her order quickly and efficiently, and get her through the line as fast as possible. Anything less than that is so far below weak that it is **unacceptable**.
(And that includes self-serve checkout!)

The interaction between customers and cashiers is critically important because it is often the last memory the customer has of your store.

Weak: You ask, *"Are you ready to check out?"* (Of course she is. She has been standing in line for five minutes!)

Good: You ask, *"Did you find everything?"* (That gives her a chance to tell you what she wanted to buy, but is not.)

Great: You ask, *"Is there anything else you need (or I can do for you)?"* (This gives her one more chance to ask for help with your services.)

WOW!: You offer specific suggestions for other products or services that compliment her purchase. You reinforce her choices with compliments and reassurance that she made a good choice. You give her tips or suggestions that will make the purchases even better such as creative ways to use the products. *(Yeah, all the same things you did at the close of the sale. Do them again.)*

Plus, you help carry her items out to the car, suggest where she can go to eat or to do more shopping. You get her signed up for your newsletters and for any special deals or drawings you offer. And you get her in your *Special Customers* book.

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Problem Customers

You made the sale. She left happy. Now she is back with a problem. Problem Customers can be your best friends. If you can **WOW!** them, you can turn them from your biggest enemy into your most loyal evangelist.

You just have to take it to the next level.

Weak: You find a manager to deal with the problem.

Good: You take the customer away from others where the complaint can be dealt with in private. You go find a manager to deal with the problem.

Great: You take the customer away and try to solve the problem yourself to the customer's satisfaction without needing to wait for a manager.

WOW!: You own the problem from the start. You apologize and admit you made a mistake. You solve the problem to the satisfaction of the customer. You report your solution to the manager and follow up with the customer later to make sure she is still satisfied.

Returns

Sometimes the problem is not anything more than the customer needing to make a return. We all have return policies, more often than not made to protect *our* interests, not the customer's.

Your return policy can **WOW!** a customer, too, when you make it in *their* best interest, not yours.

Weak: You take back anything unopened with receipt within 30 days.

Good: You take back anything unopened, receipt or not, within 90 days.

Great: You take back anything unopened, anything opened and damaged/not working, receipt or no receipt, within 6 months.

WOW!: You take back anything, no questions asked, no time limit. *(Well, you should at least ask non-threatening questions about why they are making a return so you know if there is a problem with the product.)*

Not Everyone Can Do It

It takes a special effort and a special attitude to elevate your customer service to **WOW!**

And it starts with **YOU**.

You have to be offering **WOW!** to every customer you meet at every opportunity you get. You have to be showing your staff the proper behavior through your own actions and interactions with the customers.

Then you have to be training your staff to offer the same or better service as you. Your customers deserve the best even when you're not on the sales floor.

Once you elevate to **WOW!** you will see a change in your customer relationships, your customer loyalty, your word-of-mouth referrals, and most importantly, your sales.

Sales are the result that happens when you Service the Customer.

*Teach **WOW!** to your staff in a fun and memorable way. Download the free eBook **"Staff Meetings Everyone Wants to Attend"** at **www.PhilsForum.com.***