

Customer Serve US vs. Customer Service: Getting fast food AND attitude

By Mac Cassity

I am not condoning fast food. Heck, it's downright bad for you most times, and sometimes, after polishing off a big burger and fries, I can actually feel my heart...NOT a good thing. Here's the deal though. When I am purchasing something from someone, I expect SOME level of respect! Now, I don't need to be bowed to, or given a brand new car just because I bought a burger, but I mean, come on...I can't even get a THANK YOU??? Here is what happened just the other day, and it is repeated countless times all over the country and it's starting to drive me batty...

(pulling up at Wendy's drive through, could be McDonald's, Taco Bell, insert fast food place as you will)

ME: "Hello?"

Brain dead drive through attendant: "yeah...hang on."

ME: "Scuse me?"

Brain dead: "Hang ON..."

ME: frustrated

Brain dead: "Yeah."

ME: "Ready for my order?"

Brain dead: "YEAH"

So this is just the beginning, the ORDERING process, and ALREADY I have indigestion! The sad part is, I am such an idiot, that after this pathetic excuse for a representative of our labor force rudely hands me my bag of slop (which is not what I ordered, as if it is an incredibly complex job of matching a certain combination of burgers and fries to the person who actually ordered them) I say "Thanks" knowing FULL WELL that the only thing awaiting me is, silence. No, "You're welcome." No friendly smile and wave. No "come again, valued customer!" Just someone who feels like their life is over because they have been punished by god himself for having to operate this hell on earth fast food drive- thru position. It seems to me that there was a time when people were thankful to have a job, no matter what it was. Where the ability to perform at a high level was respected, no matter WHAT the position was. Now, if someone is not making \$75 an hour and driving a Beamer, it seems they would rather kill you than serve you...and it makes me SICK.

I don't have the ability to act that way. I don't. I am not programmed to be rude, ESPECIALLY when other individuals are standing before me saying things like "Thank you" and "Have a good day." What is wrong with these people? Is it the youth of today? Is it the grease in the fast food frying their brains? Do they REALLY hate me? No. It is lack of effective and impactful authority.

GOTCHA! You thought I was going to make some big statement about the downturn of society and why we are all going to hell in a hand basket, didn't you? Well, not so...I will save that for another article. The reality is this: Because of the automation of society, certain tasks and processes have become SO EASY to duplicate, that just about anyone can do them, and just about anybody does. Let me give you an example.

Such was the time that owning a restaurant was not only difficult; it required a high level of skill. Automation was at a minimum, and the respect for the knowledge and skill to perform it was high, not to mention the owner's respect for the folks that paid his/her bills, the CUSTOMER. Nowadays, so many processes are automated. Someone orders, you push a button, the burgers and fries are within arm's reach. The drinks wind around on a robotic arm and drop at your fingertips, and you listlessly hand it out the window. Now, these processes can help make these businesses more profitable and more effective when it comes to product delivery, but it has taken the skill needed out of the equation. An owner, or manager can simply train an employee to run the automation, and make sure the place doesn't burn down...not TOO difficult. A lot of managers I have talked with don't even have training in place for insuring that employees deal with customers properly. Sure, they include the smile and "You're welcome" as obligatory in the basic company training, but I have found in my consulting and observation that it is rarely if ever enforced. How about taking some time to pay attention to the ones who matter...THE CUSTOMERS! We pay their bills. Without us, they wouldn't exist. A lot of people have the belief that we DON'T matter, because if you don't go, then someone else will, so what good does boycotting do? A lot actually. Businesses still fail, and the number one reason they do is STILL lack of sales. You see, these businesses have LOTS of overhead. They have to produce and grow to success and profit. If we, the customer, start to become choosy and put customer service as a priority, and ONLY visit those places that do well with it, then guess what? It will have a ripple effect. The things that are rewarded are duplicated, bottom line. So if restaurant A gets tons of customers because of how well they treat their customers, and are incredibly profitable, then restaurant B will follow suit...OR go out of business. Either scenario is better than just relying on status quo or acting like everyone is just a number.

So what's my point? Am I asking the world to stay away from fast food restaurants or any establishment that doesn't practice good customer service? Not exactly, but let's make them think.

MANGERS/OWNERS: Make being nice a PRIORITY for your employees, not a luxury for the customers. Make the experience memorable, and they will come back. We know it is 7-10 more expensive to acquire a new customer than to keep an existing one, so KEEP us! And it will only cost you the price of a smile and some friendly rapport. CUSTOMERS: Be nice yourselves! Understand there is stress behind those jobs and act accordingly. Don't be disrespectful, but expect respect nonetheless. You should be treated nicely, but they are NOT your servants. If we can both work together, we can spread a little civility into an area that is severely lacking. The bottom line is, as I have said, behavior that is rewarded is repeated. Be nice, expect nice...it can work! The next time you go through the fast food line, smile, and look your server in the eyes. Treat them with respect, and expect the same. If you don't get it and your experience is a little like the one I described in my opening, get the manager. They should at least be aware that folks care. The message will get through eventually.