



Satisfied Employees, A Powerful Marketing Strategy

By Kathleen Gage

Even in today's uncertain economic times, there are companies who are doing extraordinarily well. Why is it that some companies are thriving while others are barely making it? You can always blame the economy, but is that the only reason? The answer could be as simple as how respected and appreciated your staff feels.

Recently I visited a store to buy pet supplies. I was given a pleasant greeting, assisted with my purchase and made to feel like a valued customer. It was a good experience until I paid for my purchase. The clerk began badmouthing the fact that her boss, the owner, took the afternoon off. The clerk seemed to feel obligated to tell me how much better she could run the business if she had the authority. I simply smiled, secretly wishing for the experience to be over as quickly as possible.

I considered this to be an isolated case and dismissed it. The clerk was just having a bad day. I went in on another occasion and had a similar experience with another clerk. However, this time the other clerk didn't seem to care if I bought anything or not. All she wanted to do was put down the owner.

I haven't been back since the second experience, nor do I feel comfortable referring anyone to the store. Based on my experiences, I have to assume that these employees do not feel valued by their boss. If they did, I hardly think they would talk so poorly behind the owner's back. I assume these employees work just enough to justify their paycheck. I can also assume they won't do anything to generate new business. What a pity. And what a missed opportunity for everyone.

In today's competitive business environment, companies can foolishly waste phenomenal amounts of money on what they assume are effective marketing strategies in order to gain more customers. Yet if their marketing strategy does not include employee satisfaction, these new customers may

have a less than pleasant experience and will be less likely to return.

How many companies spend a fortune on marketing in order to gain a larger customer base yet miss the key ingredient to the foundation of their success? A successful foundation lies within their employees. Do they enjoy working for the organization? How good do they feel about their role within the company? What do they say and do on the job (both during and after business hours)? Most importantly, do they feel respected and appreciated?

A committed staff can literally turn a floundering company around. At a minimum they can help to keep it afloat. When people feel appreciated, they are more likely to be loyal, creative, and trustworthy. They are willing to do what it takes to keep customers happy. They are less likely to undermine the success of the organization or merely be in a state of complacency while at work. Satisfied and loyal employees make excellent public relations representatives who truly have the desire to make your customers happy.

There are many owners and managers who still maintain the outdated belief that an employee should just be happy to have a job. They seem to think any investment in their people is a waste of time and money. Have they ever thought that this could be the reason for such low productivity and morale and poor customer service?

Smart managers and owners are taking a much more progressive and holistic approach to how they run their businesses. One such approach is setting up programs to express appreciation and respect for their staff. A good incentive program for your employees not only makes excellent business sense, it is also a very powerful marketing strategy.

Key to the success of any incentive program is sincerity. If you implement a program only to see how much you can get out of people, chances of failure are high. Additionally, the actions of the management

team have to match the philosophy of the program you implement in order to succeed.

The greatest key to success with an incentive program is to commit to a high level of respect for your team. Remember always that without your staff you not likely to succeed.

Columnist Kathleen Gage is a business advisor, keynote speaker, trainer and author working with family-owned businesses, franchised organizations, corporations in both the private and public sector in areas of marketing, PR, customer relations and

employee satisfaction. Visit www.kathleengage.com or email kathleen@turningpointpresents.com or call 801.466-3630.