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In the News - Our Take on What it Means to You

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Greetings!

Customer Service...Is that My Job?

I'm worried about the the relationship between law enforcement and law abiding citizens.

Maybe its the current environment pitting taxpayers against the public sector, and the public sector against the taxpayers as tax revenues fall. Maybe I'm all wet and there isn't an issue. My gut tells me there are some issues to be addressed.

Whatever the cause, if it exists, and if it isn't addressed it will lead to a lack of trust by the very citizens that law enforcement personnel need to do their jobs.

It started with two recent interactions with neighbors that are honorable, dedicated citizens, involved on community boards, school volunteer projects, and as many charitable activities they can allocate their time to. Both are professionals, one a mechanical engineer, the other an electrical engineer.

Both are very even keel, steady personalities, who greatly appreciate the role police officers play in society.

However, both recently expressed negative opinions about their interactions with local law enforcement. They may be exceptions, but they may also be canaries in the proverbial coal mine, as ICJE has recieved numerous requests for programs to educate and train personnel in "basic customer service skills" prompted by interactions that mirror the experiences of my neighbors.

In the first instance, a neighbors car was parked in his driveway overnight, and upon leaving for work the next morning he discovered that it had been broken into. His calls to the local police department, and the detective he was transeferred to led him to tell me "I have been paying taxes for more than 30 years in this city, I have never called for police help, but I was just treated as if my call was chicken feed, and that the police had far more important things going on than to bother with my vandalism call."

While he understood in concept that his issue paled in comparison to all of the other issues the department dealt with, he simply asked: "Why didn't they at least act liked they cared?" As he shared his story more and more victims of similar acts began sharing the same story.

Not long after that, and in another jusisdiction my ohter neighbor encountered a similar situation.

Then my wife was pulled over for speeding in another city near our home. She said that while she wasn't watching her speedometer, she didn't feel as if she was speeding. However, a van had just passed her at a high rate of speed as both approcahed the officer shooting radar. The officer didn't want to hear anything about that.

My wife described the officer as "the most arrogant, obnoxious, rude person" she has ever met.

She accepted the ticket and left with a terrible impression of the officer. A year later she saw on the news that the same officer that had given her a ticket, had been fired after driving drunk, and fighting the officers that pulled her over.

While all of these incidents may be exceptions, they left individuals inclined to be strong law enforcement supporters, with a negative impression of the officers they encountered.

What do you think? Unfortunate isolated events, or something more?

Jim Rechel - Newsletter Editor

Customer Service...It is My Job?

For fair and balanced reporting, our van was hit by a hit and run driver in a mall parking lot. A witness took notes, called police. They tracked down the tag number, brought up the drivers license picture on the in cruiser terminal, asked the witness for a description, which matched, and then called the city police where the car was registered. They tracked down the owner who returned to the scene (all in less than 45 minutes). Truly customer service at its best.

I made sure I called and thanked the witness and officer for their outstanding work.

I was reminded of this event in my life as I watched the CBS Sunday Morning piece titled: "Officer with Record Number of Complaints".

Link to CBS Sunday Morning: [Officer With Record Number of Complaints](#)

One Officer's Thought

"Given that the general public will only interact with the police very few times in their entire life, it's important that they are respected and treated well, providing they're not being rude themselves. If they're mistreated, then I'm not surprised a big portion of the public don't like the police."

Huntsville Police Officers Recognized for 'Outstanding Service' at Community Watch Awards



Six officers from the Huntsville Police Department accepted "Safe Community Awards" at the Huntsville-Madison County Senior Center Tuesday. (Nicole Emmett/ The Huntsville Times)

"Safe Community Awards" were presented to six Huntsville police officers, based on outstanding service and their efforts to improve life in areas with active watch programs.

Officer Karl Kissich-West Precinct
Officer Neal Jenkins-West Precinct
Officer Joshua Bates-North Precinct
Officer Steve Graham-North Precinct
Officer Will McDonald-South Precinct
Officer John Citrano-South Precinct

Jason Fanning, a civilian employee, received the President's Award for service and contributions to the improvement of the Huntsville Community Watch website.

To read the article: [Huntsville Times al.com](http://HuntsvilleTimes.com)

Ten Commandments of Customer Service - Can You Make Them Work in Your Organization?

The following article was written by Susan Friedmann. Make a few changes as necessary for your organization. You might be surprised at the results.

The Ten Commandments of Customer Service

1. Know who is boss. You are in business to service customer needs, and you can only do that if you know what it is your customers want. When you truly listen to your customers, they let you know what they want and how you can provide good service. Never forget that the customer pays our salary and makes your job possible.

Who is your customer? Change the name to fit your situation. It can be powerful.

2. Be a good listener. Take the time to identify customer needs by asking questions and concentrating on what the customer is really saying. Listen to their words, tone of voice, body language, and most importantly, how they feel. Beware of making assumptions - thinking you intuitively know what the customer wants. Do you know what three things are most important to your customer?

Effective listening and undivided attention are particularly important on the show floor where there is a great danger of preoccupation - looking around to see to whom else we could be selling to.

3. Identify and anticipate needs. Customers don't buy products or services. They buy good feelings and solutions to problems. Most customer needs are emotional rather than logical. The more you know your customers, the better you become at anticipating their needs.
Communicate regularly so that you are aware of problems or upcoming needs.
4. Make customers feel important and appreciated. Treat them as individuals. Always use their name and find ways to compliment them, but be sincere. People value sincerity. It creates good feeling and trust. Think about ways to generate good feelings about doing business with you. Customers are very sensitive and know whether or not you really care about them. Thank them every time you get a chance.
On the show floor be sure that your body language conveys sincerity. Your words and actions should be congruent.
5. Help customers understand your systems. Your organization may have the world's best systems for getting things done, but if customers don't understand them, they can get confused, impatient and angry. Take time to explain how your systems work and how they simplify transactions. Be careful that your systems don't reduce the human element of your organization.
6. Appreciate the power of "Yes". Always look for ways to help your customers. When they have a request (as long as it is reasonable) tell them that you can do it. Figure out how afterwards. Look for ways to make doing business with you easy. Always do what you

say you are going to do.

7. Know how to apologize. When something goes wrong, apologize. It's easy and customers like it. The customer may not always be right, but the customer must always win. Deal with problems immediately and let customers know what you have done. Make it simple for customers to complain. Value their complaints. As much as we dislike it, it gives us an opportunity to improve. Even if customers are having a bad day, go out of your way to make them feel comfortable.
8. Give more than expected. Since the future of all companies lies in keeping customers happy, think of ways to elevate yourself above the competition. Consider the following:
 - o What can you give customers that they cannot get elsewhere?
 - o What can you do to follow-up and thank people even when they don't buy?
 - o What can you give customers that is totally unexpected?
9. Get regular feedback. Encourage and welcome suggestions about how you could improve. There are several ways in which you can find out what customers think and feel about your services.
 - o Listen carefully to what they say.
 - o Check back regularly to see how things are going.
 - o Provide a method that invites constructive criticism, comments and suggestions.
10. Treat employees well. Employees are your internal customers and need a regular dose of appreciation. Thank them and find ways to let them know how important they are. Treat your employees with respect and chances are they will have a higher regard for customers. Appreciation stems from the top. Treating customers and employees well is equally important.

Resources to Consider

The city of Redondo Beach has an interesting guide if you are tasked with improving your service to citizens.

Read the Guide: [Redondo Beach Guidelines](#)

APTA

APTA Annual Meeting and Training

The 2012 training and annual meeting date is set for December 11, 2012, at AUM in Montgomery. The training and meeting are free to APTA members and a complementary lunch will be provided. This promises to be our best seminar yet, so please plan to attend. Those attending the training will receive 6 APOST CEUs.

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