

Client Newsletter

Quarter 3, 2011

WANT A BETTER REPUTATION? START WITH BETTER SERVICE, SAY EXPERTS

I'm wrapping up my series about online reputation management today by connecting a few important dots. Experts say that by drawing these strategic lines, you won't just get your company's reputation under control; you could fix your customer-service problems, too.

And who doesn't want to have great customer service?

We want to be the next **Amazon**, **Kohl's** or **Costco** - the top-rated companies in a recent customer ranking by the **Temkin Group**. We want to get a glowing write-up from a management professor, like **Wal-Mart** did after Hurricane Katrina, for our reputation management initiatives.

Perhaps more to the point, here's what we *don't* want: We don't want to have the next United Breaks Guitars and the subsequent fallout. Or to have something like the Dell Hell chart on **Jeff Jarvis'** blog, often cited by rep managers as a case-in-point for managing a corporate brand and reputation.

We've already covered the link between service and reputation. And we've seen the importance of negative feedback to improving customer service.

But let's take a few steps in your customer's shoes. How are they interacting with the information about your company?

[More....](#)

By Christopher Elliott, BNET, April 21, 2011

BETTER SHOP AROUND

Cumberland Gulf Group turns to mystery shopping for tobacco compliance efforts.

It's not easy to be a tobacco retailer in Lee, Mass. For one thing, even if you have tobacco sales training within your stores, your clerks also must participate in the town's certification program and keep their certification card on hand. Moreover, if one of your clerks still ends up selling to a minor even once, you could end up having your tobacco license suspended for several days.

That was the challenge that faced Terri Murray, Massachusetts turnpike operations manager for the Framingham, Mass.-based Cumberland Gulf Group. "There's just a lot of hardship on any retailer that loses their

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Calendar of Events

Sept 11th - 14th
Annual marketing research conference in Orlando. [Details...](#)

Sept 21st - 23rd
Corporate Researchers conference in Chicago. [Details...](#)

Oct 12th - 14th
Qualitative Research Consultants Assoc. conference in Las Vegas. [Details...](#)

Oct 19th - 21st
Council of American Survey Research Organizations conference in Palm Beach. [Details....](#)

ability to sell tobacco products and compete in the marketplace," she tells *Tobacco E-News*.

She implemented a "card all" policy at the company's two Lee stores to take the guesswork out for clerks "because it is this constant cloud hanging over your head that says did my manager train them enough; did they talk to them enough; do they constantly provide feedback; are they constantly talking about making sure they protect themselves and the company."

Enter Hooksett, N.H.-based **Customer Perspectives**. Murray was already working with the company to provide customer service/image-oriented mystery shopping. "I asked them if there was something that they could do for me, in regards to checking to see if my people are following the rules." At the company's other locations, clerks only card anyone who looks under 30 years old. Murray says carding anyone can be a daunting task, however, based on her own experiences of jumping on the register during busy times at the stores. "I even am horrified when someone asks me for a pack of cigarettes, because I really feel the pressure is on me to make the right decision." She decided to have the mystery shops look at tobacco compliance as well as customer service issues.

[More...](#)

- By Linda Abu-Shalback Zid

LEADERSHIP CAFFEINE: DO YOU SEE BEAUTY OR BLEMISHES?

If you've ever worked for or around someone who is an expert critic...one of those individuals who can look at a masterpiece and spot a flaw, you know how demoralizing the experience can be. They look at beautiful pictures or great outcomes and focus on describing the flaws.

If you are one of these "Negative Motivators," this one's for you!

[More...](#)

By Art Petty

WHEN CRAFTING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE, SHOULD THE CUSTOMER COME FIRST?

Article Abstract

Revamping the customer experience is an inherently customer-focused endeavor but the author suggests that companies should consider taking an inside-out approach by first attempting to understand and improve their employee and organizational culture.

There are few companies that haven't embarked upon a program to radically improve their customer experience. However, the vast majority of these programs result in failure, with the experience of their customers

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remaining fragmented, inconsistent and frustrating. A study of customer experience excellence by Nunwood, a Leeds, U.K., research company, may help illustrate why.

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By David Conway, *Quirks Marketing Research Review, June 2011*

TIME TO RAISE THE BAR ON CUSTOMER SERVICE

In recent years, an increasing number of businesses have realized that they can differentiate a commodity product by offering great customer service along with that product.

Zappos certainly wasn't the first company to sell shoes over the Internet, and their prices weren't even the lowest available. In fact, in many cases, their shoes cost more than other discounters on the Internet. But the team there proactively decided that they would take a commodity product (shoes), add great service and the result was a rapidly growing business and a \$1 billion acquisition by Amazon.

[More....](#)

Written by Joe Beninato

CUSTOMER SERVICE FACTOIDS

Bad customer experience forced 22% of consumers to stop doing business with a provider during the second half of 2010

Interacting with a rude or disinterested employee was cited most frequently (34%) as a reason for switching brands, while 20% said they switched because of unexpected charges or fees and the same number listed poor product or service quality as the main reason.

The President of Customer Perspectives, Judi Hess, recently attended a Mystery Shopping Providers Association conference in Barcelona, Spain. One of the interesting things she learned was that high scores in customer service correlate with high scores in mystery shopping - even more than correlation with training.

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shopping services of Customer Perspectives by clicking on
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