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## January 2014 Client Newsletter

Dear Judi,

Each month I am sending some information about different ways our clients use the results from their mystery shops. Please let me know, when you can, your favorite ways to leverage the shops.

Judi

### Client Use of Mystery Shops

Some clients use excerpts from reports in their employee newsletter - or they send a memo around with the excerpt with the area or strength highlighted. This reinforces good service and sales skills for everyone as well as the employee who was "shopped" (e.g. - "gave a warm and friendly greeting", "recommended other items when out of stock", etc.).

### The Myth of Customer Service

There's a pervasive myth about customer service that, if you believe it, could have devastating consequences for your small business. It's one you've probably heard dozens, if not hundreds, of times over the life of your business. The myth goes something like this: "Customer service is the most important thing your business can do", or "Customer service is the one area where your business can distinguish itself from the big guys", or "Customer service matters more than anything else."

I have to admit, I've been guilty of spreading this myth myself. But I had a revelation recently while listening to a friend's experience getting a product manufactured. What seemed like a simple process, using a manufacturer recommended by a trusted colleague, had turned into an endless cycle of receiving a flawed product, getting promises it would be fixed, and having the same thing happen over and over again. In the end, my friend almost missed a crucial shipping deadline for his product launch, which would have cost him a lot of money (in addition to the gray hairs the experience already caused). Throughout the whole fiasco, he told me, "Their service is great. They're really nice, and they always get back to me right away with how they can fix the problem."

There was only one problem: They weren't fixing the problem. While by many measures of customer service-responsiveness, calmness, offering to make the fixes at no charge-this company was stellar, that didn't make up for the fact this manufacturer simply lacked the technical expertise and quality control systems to deliver.

Like all myths, the myth of customer service isn't entirely untrue. Customer service *is* a distinguishing factor for small businesses, and customers do care more about it than ever in this world of Zappos, Southwest Airlines, and other customer service stars. But if you can't deliver what you promise, the sweetness of those promises won't matter much in the end.

You might pride yourself on how well your business handles problems, but perhaps you should be paying more attention to eliminating problems in the first place. Is it better to go back and forth with a customer 15 times in a friendly fashion, or to simply provide what they ask for (without all the chat) the first time around?

What should you do if you're worried you might be falling prey to the myth of customer service?

**Assess your interactions.** How often are customer service reps or other frontline employees "touching" customers? What's the average for a purchase and why? Figure out a number that makes sense and what number indicates that something may have gone wrong.

**Control quality.** Some simple QC procedures such as having a second person check products coming off the assembly line would have prevented the hassle my friend went through with his manufacturer.

**Implement systems.** As your business grows, it's easy for systems to get sloppy. Review your manual (or create one) that details common procedures in your business so that no matter who handles the process, it's always done the same way. (Think of fast food franchises, which have strict rules down to how many slices of ham go on a sandwich, or how big a scoop of ice cream is.) Procedures ensure all customers not only get the same level of service, but also the same quality of product throughout your business.

I'm not suggesting you become the Soup Nazi (a "Seinfeld" character based on a real New York restaurateur whose soup was so delicious customers put up with his gruff demeanor). But even in today's customer-centric culture, service with a smile doesn't matter unless you've got the goods to back it up.

By Rieva Lesonsky  
Small Business Trends October, 2012

For complete article, [click here](#).

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### Upcoming Events:

Satmetrix - **Annual Net Promoter Customer Experience** - Jan 30-31 in Miami. For more information, [click here](#).

American Marketing Assoc. - "**Marketing Research Academy for Business Professionals**" program. March 18-21 in Atlanta. For more information, [click here](#).

Worldwide Business Research - "**Next Generation Customer Experience**" conference. March 18-20 in San Diego. For more information, [click here](#).

Strategy Institute - "**Customer Experience Strategies Summit**". March 25-26 in Toronto. For more information, [click here](#).

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