

Successful Supervisor Part 85

Trust and Customer Retention

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPLP

It is not hard to see the relationship between trust and customer retention. In this article I will explore the topic on a deeper level to reveal the mechanism why trust is so potent at helping to retain customers.

We are all customers

In our daily life we assume the role of customer on a regular basis. You go into restaurants and retail outlets many times a week. How long does it take you to figure out if the crew that is servicing you is a high trust group? If you are like me, it takes only a few seconds for you to assess the prevailing culture in the group that is servicing you.

1. Body Language says it all

If you are in line at a fast food establishment, you will pick up on the non-verbal cues that go back and forth among the staff. If there is high trust and affection, it will be obvious to you even before anyone speaks. If people hate each other, it is even easier to tell, and you will be uncomfortable as you gulp down your meal, anxious to get out of the place.

2. Trust means that things are working as they should

Service is much better at an establishment that has high trust. Workers instinctively back each other up in order to maximize the experience for you; the customer. If something goes wrong, the entire group is all over the problem until it is resolved. If trust is lacking, you are likely to get an excuse like, "Filling the Catsup is not part of my responsibility," or "I don't wipe down the tables; Jeffery does that job."

3. Good customer experiences bring repeat business

You are much more likely to return to an establishment where people have high trust. You get better service quicker, and the whole experience is comfortable. You will be back for more.

It works for any business

I have been using a fast food restaurant as an example thus far, but the logic holds just as well for any establishment where workers impact the customer experience. It is hard to imagine any place of business where workers have no impact on customers, so the ability to maintain and grow trust is good for both the top and bottom line.

1. You cannot fake it

A false smile and insincere “have a nice day” will not cover for bad blood between people working in a business. Customers are far more perceptive than they let on. They can sense a phony show of friendliness, and it can actually feel a bit creepy as they cannot wait to get out of the place.

2. Make respect and trust first on the agenda

If you focus on creating a culture of high trust and low fear, it will pay off huge dividends in all aspects of your operation. It is really what separates highly successful businesses from those who come and go with the changing of the seasons.

If you have managed to cultivate a culture of high trust, you will find that your whole operation is more robust. Things work like they are supposed to, and you will get the attention of higher management because your unit will outperform your peers and you will be able to attract and retain the best people. These benefits will put you in the class of elite leaders.

This is a part in a series of articles on “Successful Supervision.” The entire series can be viewed on www.leadergrow.com/articles/supervision or on this blog.

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