

Customer Service That Says, “We Want You Back”

by **MARY-ANNE DERRICK**

Sales

www.federated.ca

January 2014



MARY-ANNE DERRICK

Mary-Anne Derrick is a Sales Trainer at Federated Insurance, having worked at the company since 2005.

A Black Friday shopping experience helped this author better understand some hidden keys to great customer service.

It's easy to find examples of what NOT to do in customer service, which is why I was pleasantly surprised by the positive experience I had recently with Adam, an employee at an online computer store. Dealing with Adam revealed some keys to customer service that almost any business can use.

1. Give the gift of a listening ear

My story begins on Black Friday when I was checking a computer website for a tablet computer. I had a couple of questions so I picked up the phone. Adam answered with a “How can I help you today?” I explained why I was purchasing the tablet, what size I wanted, and whether I have Wi-Fi.

Instead of launching a barrage of questions, Adam engaged me in real conversation. To deliver an excellent customer experience, he listened actively: hearing what his customer was saying, and asking clarifying questions as needed.

2. Build trust by putting your customers' best interests ahead of short-term profit

I also wanted to order speakers for my grandson. Adam told me that, because I'd just purchased a tablet, there would be a \$50 gift card applied to my account by the following day. “So let's make sure we get the biggest bang for your dollar and wait until tomorrow to order those speakers.”

In the short term, the profit-maximizing choice would have been to process the order for the speakers promptly. However, in looking out for my best interests, Adam helped grow a relationship that kept bringing me back.

3. Sandwich your touch points

After Adam gave me his direct line, he also sent me an email with his direct line and

a note thanking me for the order. As well, the email included instructions and links to learn about the tablet I bought, a summary of the answers to my questions, as well as an invitation try other products in-person at a retail store.

Adam was using the “sandwich effect,” which is about creating touch points around and between conversation through things like follow-up emails or thank-you cards. In Adam's case, not only did his follow-up assist me in practical ways by answering questions, it also helped me remember the positive experience longer.

4. Use your knowledge to anticipate and meet needs

Our conversation continued over the next few days. When I mentioned two other gifts I needed to buy, Adam quickly found products he found exciting at a recent training event that he thought would be perfect. “Can I see a picture?” I asked. In moments, Adam directed me to the product online.

Adam showed he's passionate about his company, his industry, and staying current on new developments. But while having knowledge is great, it was only valuable because he had laid the groundwork of first understanding my needs.

5. Speed Wins in Pre- and Post-Sales Service

When the gift card finally arrived in my inbox, I emailed Adam my phone numbers and asked him to contact me. Within minutes my phone rang. Because my order was being shipped to my out-of-province daughter, Adam mentioned that if she was confused at all about how the gifts worked, to contact him directly and he would assist her.

How often have you waited on a customer service callback that might never come? For me, Adam returning calls promptly wasn't just about beating the competition to the punch, it made me feel valued and gave me confidence that any post-sales concerns would be handled effectively.

6. Getting Customers to Talk About Your Great Service

For every customer who receives bad service and complains, it's suggested 26 will not—until it's time to vent to their friends. So how do you get customers to share their good experiences more?

The key is the element of surprise. In the story above, Adam's excellent service unexpectedly blew away beliefs about what "over-the-phone service" could be, and I just had to tell others about it.

If you can find ways to consistently surprise your customers with unexpectedly great service, you'll be well on your way to a healthier bottom line. Who knows? The next "Adam" story might be about you.

© Federated Insurance Company of Canada. All rights reserved.

This document is provided by Federated Insurance Company of Canada ("Federated") for informational purposes only to augment your own internal safety, compliance and risk management practices, and is not intended as a substitute for assessment or other professional advice by a qualified person or entity. Federated makes no representations or warranties regarding the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in this document. Federated shall not be responsible in any manner for any loss, or any direct, indirect, consequential, special, punitive or other damages, arising out of your, or any other person's, use or reliance on the information contained in this document.