

A close-up photograph of a man in a dark suit and tie. He is holding a black pen to his ear as if listening, and his right hand is covering his eyes, suggesting stress or frustration. A semi-transparent dark grey rectangle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing white text.

Customer Service - Web Design Imagineers

Mini Ebook Series - Edward C Blanchard

Customer Service

When Did Customer Service Breakup?

We've all had friends in our circle who were known as "Mary & John", and when "John" split "Mary" was alone. Mary was the "odd" number at the dinner party and we were all concerned about her. Well, today it seems that the union of Customer & Service have had a breakup. Service has split and Customer is on his/her own.

Today, let me tell you a story that many of you will find all too common. I can tell you this without fear of our local editor getting sued because it's about me!

The Story Of The Lidless Bin

Four weeks ago I decided that I needed another green recycling bin. I called the Customer Service number, and as an environmentally conscious citizen requested my extra recycle bin. The cheerful voice on the other end of the line chirped, "Of course, we'll have one delivered in 48 hours." After giving her all the pertinent location information, I hung up the phone with the satisfied feeling of a good citizen.

I arrived home about 5 p.m. the next day and I was happy to see another green bin at the mouth of my driveway. When I looked again, I noticed that I had another green bin – but it was without a lid. I quickly called them again thanking the lady graciously for the rapid service and then told her about the missing lid. Just as cheerfully as the first time, she told me to leave it at the end of my driveway after my usual pickup and they would replace the entire unit since they didn't have extra lids. I agreed, and after hanging up the phone I pondered their plight of having lidless bins but no extra lids. I conjured up all sorts of scenarios that explained where all the lids to the lidless bins went, and sympathised with their predicament.

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Well, 3 days went by and there sat my poor, green, lidless bin on my driveway and a replacement never arrived. Feeling empathy for this green plastic waif, I returned it to the side of its brother that had a lid. I called my cheerful Customer Service voice again, and reiterated the plight of my poor lidless bin and after a chuckle she assured me a complete unit would be forthcoming. I found it necessary to make use of my lidless friend, and put it out the next pickup day filled to the brim. Fortunately, it wasn't windy and all the contents remained inside it. That was 2 weeks ago, and life being what it is other more important tasks have occupied me until this morning when facing another pickup day I thought of my lidless friend.

Once more I picked up the phone and called and this time I listened to a litany of choices of buttons I could punch and chose my cheerful Customer Service button again. I was transferred, listened to a brief melody when there was a "click" and I expected my cheerful voice to chirp "hello". The next thing I heard was another click, silence, and then the dreaded dial tone that means you've been disconnected. Not being one of the "fainthearted", I simply redialed my number. Again there was the litany of button choices, my choice and the music, and just when I began to feel that all was right with the world I heard - "click", "dial tone" and nothing.

This was not the morning for the phone to be playing games with me, so I made one more determined effort and REDIALED! "NASA, we have lift-off!" I once more heard the litany of button choices, but this time I outfoxed that monotonous voice and punched "0". I asked for the Manager of Customer Services, I was given her name and was transferred. What greeted my eager ear was, "You've reached the voicemail of, please leave your name and number and she'll return your call."

So here we sit - my lidless, green bin and I facing another pick-up day. This eager-to-serve plastic green waif must bravely face another dutiful day half-clothed.

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You must admit that it is a common story, and one that far too many of us have lived through, but what a sad commentary it is about our business community. Doesn't it make you wonder if our language has changed so drastically that what we interpret "Customer Service" to mean - is not what today's business owners mean. It makes me wonder when the marriage of Customer and Service broke-up, leaving us all the lonely ones.

Entrepreneurs and business owners take note! If you're going to have a number for your customers to access your Customer Service, please follow these rules:

- Have the phone manned by an employee that can hear thunder and see lightning.
- Give that employee training in helping the caller and not shuffling the problem to another desk.
- Have an overseer, who can also hear thunder and see lightning, check that all incoming complaints were handled appropriately.

After learning how to find your customers and what they want; after getting them committed to doing business with YOU; and after wooing them to keep them as your customers - WHY WOULD YOU LET "SERVICE" DIVORCE "CUSTOMER?"

If your customers aren't getting the service they require from you - your competitor will be only too happy to help them!