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Are you having issues with customer satisfaction? If so, it's time to find out why. Is it poor service? Is your product or service not achieving what it was intended to achieve? If you are getting more and more dissatisfied customers, you can't bury your head in the sand. You must actively seek out answers and solutions to your customer satisfaction issues. If you don't, you will be risking severe damage to your bottom line--or the life of your business all together. I've seen many great leaders and managers ride their ships to the bottom of the sea because they chose to ignore dissatisfied customers.

As you should already know, things are changing at a fast pace in the business and service worlds. Technology and artificial intelligence are expediting processes, enhancing systems, and making people more capable than ever before (or less capable depending on who you ask). Are you taking advantage of available technologies to help improve what you offer or provide? Have you explored every possible option that will enable you to ultimately satisfy your customers or clients? Are you finding out what they really want, need, and are willing to pay for? Are you then providing it? Are providing it faster than anyone else? If you answered “no” to any of these questions, then you need to read this column carefully. If customers aren't satisfied with what you do or what you provide, they will look or go elsewhere. If you don't want that

to happen, then it's time to provide the kind of service and/or products that attract and keep customers.

There are three levels of customer service that are possible and reaching each of these levels is like climbing a ladder. You rise to the next level by mastering the previous level.

*Level 1) Satisfy the customer.* You achieve customer satisfaction when you satisfy your customer's basic wants and needs in such a way that they have no real complaints. You meet their expectations. This is the minimum level necessary to survive in business today. The sad fact is that many companies and individuals think that customer satisfaction is the high point of achievement when it is really just a minimum condition to stay in business. They don't realize they have to go beyond Level 1.

*Level 2) Exceed the customer's expectations.* This is the basic requirement for growth in your business. One of the great success principles is: “Your success will always be in direct proportion to what you do for your customers after you do what they expect you to do.” If you only do what they expect you to do, you are in an extremely tenuous position. You are setting yourself up to be knocked off by anyone who comes along and does more than you are currently doing. It is when you do more than is expected that you pull ahead of your competitors.

*Level 3) Delight the customer.* There will be times when you have to do vastly more than just meet or exceed customer expectations. In many instances, this involves you or someone in your

company or organization going way out of the way to provide or fix something. Or perhaps you have to spend more money than you made to make something right that initially turned out wrong. This kind of customer service behavior generates loyalty that goes far beyond the price shopping that characterizes most purchase activities. Delighted customers will tell the world about you. They will brag about how amazing you are. This is how great reputations are formed--and great reputations can bring in customers from every corner of the world.

These three levels of customer service are vital if you want to succeed in your business or service. All of the planning and efforts are futile if in the end the customer isn't satisfied.

Even in life, the fundamentals of these three levels of customer service can benefit any person who applies them in various situations. Many times I've told people *their success in life will be in direct proportion to what they do after they do what they are expected to do.* Keeping this in mind, you should aim to do more than you are paid for. Always go the extra mile in your dealings (there are never any traffic jams on the extra mile!) The more often you do things better and/or faster than what you were asked to, the more often others will notice how good and how valuable you are.

Satisfying customers, clients, bosses, colleagues, family members, friends, and even strangers will go a long way in your effectiveness as a leader and as a person.

~ The End ~