

The YEBDC Small Business Information Column

by Sue Gingerich, Business Advisor

"Customer Service - Poor Examples"

Normally, I do not write using an editorial style but this month I felt strongly compelled to write about some things that I saw, in our region, during the past month. The reason for my fervour this month is because, I was not only witness to, but subjected to some exceptional examples of poor customer service. The unwitting businesses have most likely lost themselves thousands of dollars in business. Not only from losing my sale that day but from losing any future sales to me; and, most likely, many of my friends. I won't name any names here in my column, in order to be fair. (They may have just been having a bad day!)

I have written on the subject of customer service on more than one occasion and I know lots of people are reading my column because they come up to me and say, "Hey, you're the lady that writes in the newspaper." But obviously not everyone reads my column. So I have a proposition to make to my loyal readers. If you come across a business that does not provide you with good customer service in the next month, clip this column and leave it on their cash desk, or if you are brave enough, take it directly to the owner of the establishment!

The following are all real life incidents that happened to me, all on ONE day, in ONE community.

The first incident was a farm equipment dealership, where my fiance and I stopped by to price some tractors. The salesman was out of town. No one was assigned to take his place. They took our name and number, but, we have yet to hear back from them. To ME this is unacceptable.

The second incident was a restaurant, and to be fair to the waitress, her service was wonderful. BUT, the restaurant, although very tastefully decorated, had a heavy layer of dust on the decorated tables, the floor looked like it needed a good vacuuming and the eating tables were not completely dirt free. My meal tasted quite delicious, but my fiancé had liver that tasted like shoe leather. My biggest concern was, if the surroundings were that dusty, how clean was the kitchen? I doubt we will return to that restaurant anytime soon.

Two other incidents stuck with me that day. One was a business that was closed over the lunch hour. This is the second or third time I have stopped by this business to find it closed on the lunch hour. (I doubt I will try it again.) I wonder if they realize how much business they are losing by being closed at one of the busiest times of the day? Maybe they should try bringing their lunch and stay open once, just to see if anyone comes in during the lunch hour. I think, if even one customer comes in during that time, it is worth being open. If you lose just that one customer, it could, over a lifetime, add up to thousands of dollars! The next business we walked into, they didn't even look up from their parts books the entire time we were in the shop. There were at least two people behind the counter. We were in that business for at least 5 minutes and were looking at pricing quads, and a generator. You can rest assured when we are ready to spend that \$10,000.00, it won't be there.

If you would like to know if your business is providing first class customer service, call us at The YEBDC, to hire our Phantom Shopper, who will shop your business anonymously during various times and by various "shoppers" and then report back directly to you.

I really hate to see the businesses of our region lose sales, but if we are not giving the customer what he wants and what he expects, can we really blame him for shopping elsewhere?

If you have a small business and have a question or problem that you think The YEBDC could help you with, please call: 1-800-556-0328 or 1-780-785-2900, email: yebdc@yebdc.ab.ca, or write to: "The Yellowhead East Business Development Corporation", Box 249, Sangudo, Alberta, T0E 2A0

"Takin' Care of Business... Takin' Care of You!"