

The YEBDC Small Business Information Column

by Sue Gingerich, Business Advisor

"Customers Happy Meter"

What does your customer's happy meter read? "What is a happy meter," you ask. A happy meter is the internal gauge that the customer uses to keep unconscious score of how satisfied he is, with the shopping experience, in your place of business.

That meter may start rising, or falling, before the customer ever walks through your business's door. Many things can positively or negatively affect your customer's happy meter. For example, if your customer drives by and cannot quickly and easily see if your establishment is open, it may negatively impact his happy meter. If, however, when he walks through the door, he is promptly and courteously approached by a salesperson, the customer's happy meter may rise dramatically.

The areas that affect a customer's happy meter, are; overall satisfaction and how easy or difficult the shopping experience was. Things that help the happy meter rise in the overall satisfaction category, are:

1. Helpful, friendly, knowledgeable, courteous staff.
2. Quality equalling the price of the product or service.
3. Prompt service.
4. Selection or choices matching the customer's expectation.
5. Clean, appealing business atmosphere.
6. Several payment options (i.e. cash, visa, debit card).
7. Respect (the customer is never wrong or stupid).
8. Recognition of the customer, if he has been in before.
9. If the customer's problem was solved.

The things that affect how easy or difficult the shopping experience was, are:

1. Convenient, well advertised or displayed hours of operation.
2. Convenient, easy to find location.
3. Easy access to the business (including parking).
4. Informative advertising.
5. Items are well laid out, and easy to find, in the business.
6. Delivery or carry out in certain types of businesses.
7. Questions are answered quickly and promptly.
8. Flexibility on the part of the seller.
9. How quickly and easily the customer's problem was solved.

So, what do you think your customer's happy meter is reading? Try walking through your business like a typical customer would. What do you see, where are your staff, what are they doing? Quiz your staff from time to time on the products and services you sell. What can they tell you about them? Also, stand out front of your business, what do you see? Have the staff taken all the prime parking spaces? How convenient is it for your customer to pop in the front door to ask a question?

If you still don't know what your customer's happy meter is reading, but want to find out, one solution is The YEBDC - Phantom Shopper Program. The phantom shopper will "shop" your place of business like a customer would, but instead of walking away and not telling you about his or her, good or bad experience, the phantom will report back directly to you the owner, and give you a detailed report on their experience.

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

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