

Where marketing ends

Obviously, as a marketing communications person, I believe that marketing is helpful and mostly necessary if you want to promote an event, sell a product or service or obtain support. If people don't know you are there, they can't buy from you or support your cause. However, at some point marketing ends and customer service starts.

Let me share a story with you. I have been going to a hair salon in DC for a bit over a year. It doesn't advertise much and really depends on word of mouth. They have my business solely based on my experience. My last visit was last week. I had to wait and then the hairdresser, who has been cutting my hair for a year, did not remember me. It was as if I had never been there. She was unfriendly and she made me late for my next appointment. My hair did not look good. I felt upset and in general, the experience was bad. Would I go back? Absolutely not. Would I recommend the place to anyone? Not a chance. So Fiddleheads on 17th Street, NW in Washington, DC, not only have you lost a customer but you have lost my word-of-mouth marketing on your behalf.

Could this situation be averted? Yes. Communication would have helped, as would a system where the salon keeps track of its customers, their preferences, when they've visited, etc. Can it be fixed retroactively? No. There is nothing that can fix a bad experience once it has happened. I would never trust my hair to this nasty woman who clearly does not care who she is working with.

My point is that marketing, including word-of-mouth marketing can only go so far. **The service/product/cause has to live up to the expectation or else you won't buy it or use it or support it.** I want to point you also to this article on Adweek, by Joseph Jaffe, "Customer Service is Key Strategy." Give it a read. Jaffe's point is that customers are lifeblood

to a business and serving them should be one of your marketing strategies (interestingly, the article changed names from when I read it earlier today, when it said Customer Service is a Key Differentiator).

What are your experiences? Have you ever been turned off by a service experience to such an extent that you never bought from the vendor? Heck, let me do a poll:

[polldaddy poll=2827189]

