

Want to improve your marketing? Start with your customer service.

The best, most award-winning ad in the world won't sway an unhappy customer's mind. Keep that in mind as you tinker with your marketing and you don't check in with your customer service.

If you live in Washington, DC or Maryland, you probably have PEPCO as your electric company. And if you were around this past summer or during the massive blizzards of February, you probably lost your power. You tried calling PEPCO only to get bad information or no information at all. Then you found out that PEPCO is rated very poorly among all electric utility companies in the United States. You probably weren't surprised.

Fast forward to the Fall of 2010. PEPCO is busy running a TV commercial featuring the company president assuring the viewers that PEPCO is responding to customer concerns. But, is it true?

Yesterday, I had to call PEPCO. I was on hold for 21 minutes. And there was no emergency. Can you imagine what hold times will be when there are outages?

This is a case where PEPCO is investing money in its marketing without investing money in customer service. This is a major mistake. Customers don't care if you are running a great ad campaign, have well written brochures and a redesigned website, if they cannot get through to an agent to resolve their problems.

Customers will judge a company on its service, not on its marketing. Marketing may get customers through the door, but

it will not retain them or make them think positively about your company or organization (this applies to nonprofits as well).

Before you spend any money on a marketing campaign, make sure that you have budgeted for customer service.