

Customer service IS marketing

There should be no doubt that a company's customer service plays a huge role in marketing. Put bluntly, if a company has poor customer service, there will be fewer customers at the end of the day. The only exception to this rule is with monopolies like power and telephone companies, which often provide bad service but customers are forced to remain with them as they cannot take their business elsewhere.

Let me give you a personal example. My website is currently hosted at Mediatemple. I have had hosting there since 2004. Off and on during the past seven years, I have had email retrieval issues among other problems. This past Friday, I noticed my Outlook was not able to access my email. It happened again on Monday, at which point I opened a support request with Mediatemple online. I have learned, through negative interactions in the past, that calling the 1-800 number results in long waits and unhelpful personnel.

After a few hours, I had received no response, so I tweeted it out. Mediatemple responds immediately to tweets. I did not get a response from the support request until 24 hours later. It told me I should check my email settings. I did what they suggested, and the problem persisted. Mind you, I had no problem accessing my other email on the same Outlook, using the same ISP. In my mind, the problem was clearly on Mediatemple's side. At Mediatemple, they refused to believe my claims as a customer, or accept that there could be an issue on their end. The couple of emails/tweets that followed told me to call customer service to troubleshoot my settings. Again, my settings had never been changed and the Outlook was working just fine with my other account.

Clearly, to Mediatemple, it is easier to shift the blame to the customer than to check their service. This has happened many times before (once, I was actually told when my website

was down, that I had “broken” it...I wouldn’t know how to do that). Well, enough is enough. Since I am going to relaunch my website in the next few days, I am taking my hosting elsewhere. Customer service is the reason.

Customer service can play a tremendous role in keeping customers happy and COMING back for more. Nordstrom’s is well known for excellent customer service, and in fact, it is its key differentiating factor. An article in Bloomberg Businessweek claims that:

For the most part, the Nordstroms have succeeded by making customer service the good they’re really selling, say industry observers. Though many retailers embrace “customer centricity,” a fancy term for putting the customer first, few equal Nordstrom, which routinely ranks in the top three on Luxury Institute surveys that measure customer satisfaction.

Read that again: **customer service is the good that Nordstrom’s is selling.** Not the clothes or the jewelry. The SERVICE. And it has made the company GROW.

If companies spends lots of money on marketing materials, advertising and public relations but neglect their customer service, the marketing efforts will be for naught.