

# Care matters more than marketing

A few weeks ago, I dropped my old Samsung smartphone, rendering it useless. Panicked at the thought of not being able to check Facebook on the fly (kidding), I ran over to the ATT store nearest me. There, a very young person pretending to be a customer service agent, did *not* help me get a phone.

## Here's why care matters

First, I had a contact lens emergency. I asked to use the restroom to deal with it. The young lady said no restroom was available. Evidently, ATT does not care about the well being and comfort of visitors to its stores.

Second, I asked her to see a Galaxy S7. She told me they don't have them in stock. Only the more expensive Galaxy S8s. I don't want to spend the extra money I told her. She then said maybe it could be shipped to me, but that it would take a week. A week? Without a phone? I asked her if she could check availability at nearby retailers. No, she said, she couldn't possibly do that. Could she expedite shipping then? No, she couldn't do that either.

Third, and finally, I said: "What if I go over to the Sprint or T-Mobile store then? I am not under contract with ATT." She shrugged. She didn't care. I left.

## Another young person without a clue

I drove up the street to BestBuy. There, the store did have some Galaxy S7s in stock. However, the young (notice a theme here) "sales" person was not super helpful. He did get me a phone, but only after telling me several times that I should get the S8. He also tried to scare me into getting GeekSquad protection. And into getting a screen protector, case,

charger, etc. In short, he was being a real pain. And to boot, he would not even try to get my contacts and other information off my old phone. I am not even going into the whole story but suffice it to say that the 24-year-old had a horrible attitude.

### **Being helpful and trying to resolve problems goes a very long way**

I ended up speaking to the kid's manager, who promised to speak to him and to help me out. The next day, the much nicer (and older) manager spent nearly two hours with me, getting the stuff off the old phone and transferring it to my new phone and to a flash drive. He saved the day for me, and gave me a much more positive view of BestBuy.

### **Complaining to ATT garnered zero action**

I called ATT and after dealing with the most annoying robot, I got through to a customer care agent. I told her I had a complaint about the store I went to. She put me through to a manager who didn't see a problem, didn't even ask what store it was or the name of the employee. I then tweeted the wrongly named @attcares. No care there either.

### **Is all well that ends well?**

In the end, I have a working phone. I have my contacts. I have my photos. I don't have voice mail but that is the subject for another day.

ATT can market all they want but unless they start showing some care, I will not stick with them as a customer. Their Twitter "customer service" is slow to respond, and that makes it nearly useless. Their customer service via phone has gone down hill. If you have a problem with ATT, it seems you are on your own.

We are fine with any company until there is a problem that the

company will not *try* to solve. If a company shows genuine care (like the BestBuy manager did), you are willing to overlook the problem. If a company does not show care (like ATT), you are not willing to give it a second chance.

What do you think? Do you stick with companies that treat you poorly? How important for you is it to get good customer service?

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## How do your customers feel?

It seems that many businesses, especially the big ones, spend much more money on memorable advertising campaigns and very little on customer service. No matter how great a business is, there will always be customer service to be done (changing addresses, paying bills, correcting billing errors, etc.). Yet, many businesses ignore the basics.

A couple of examples:

**Netflix.** Netflix does not seem to care much about how its customers feel. The company does not respond to Twitter mentions. It doesn't seem to be concerned about negative postings. How do I know? Well, I have had *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* at the top of my Netflix queue for about six weeks or more. At first, there was a "long wait." Now, it's a "short wait." Bottom line is that I have watched several other movies while still waiting for *Salmon Fishing*. And I have tweeted Netflix. And I have wanted to email them—there is no easy way to do that.

**ATT.** I have been with ATT for years now. I recently upgraded

to a smartphone and was told that I was eligible for the upgrade (which apparently means in ATT language they will CHARGE you for this upgrade). I called to see if they would take this charge off—and my argument was 1) I was not advised of such a charge and 2) I was told I was eligible for an upgrade. The customer service agent said he would give me a “courtesy one-time waiver” of this fee, but proceeded to lecture me that this fee was something all carriers do and that ATT would charge me it with every subsequent upgrade. He was combative and rude, and when I pointed this out to him, he hung up on me. I called back and spoke to supervisor and she told me the same thing about the charge (a bit less rudely). I repeatedly told her that I have been an ATT customer for years, I pay my bills on time, and ATT had given me no special offers. Bottom line in my experience: ATT does not care.

Netflix and ATT appear to be utterly unconcerned with how their customers feel about them. I am just one more customer.

In contrast, I flew **Delta** last month and was amazed by the airline’s interest in my customer experience. After the first flight I was sent a survey to measure what I thought of the boarding process, etc. The return flight was badly delayed due to weather in Washington. Delta sent an apology for the delay (even though it was truly not at fault) and asked how the gate agent and flight attendants acted during the delay.

Customer service and experience should be an integral part of an organization’s overall marketing strategy. If your organization does not know anything about how your customers feel, and does not respond to customer issues, you are well on your way to losing those customers.

**Marketing should be both about ATTRACTING customers and RETAINING them.**

Thoughts?