How to become the most hated company

Yesterday, I talked about how you can make sure people dislike you. It's not hard—all you have to do is be self-centered and creepy. Well, how about making your company on of the most hated companies in America? That is a new level of dislike, and Pepco has reached it.

The article about this "honor" in WTOP (Berzerk customers make Pepco 'most hated' in U.S.) tells us that the power company has had a drop in customer satisfaction since last year, due in part to:

> *frequent and wide-ranging outages made worse by belated customer service response… Pepco has had **reliability problems in the past**, but not as serious as the last year when its customers faced 70% more power outages than households in other metropolitan areas, along with outages lasting twice as long on average.*

What is most interesting to me is how Pepco responded to this "accolade" reported in the website Business Insider. Here is what the article said

> *Pepco initially issued a statement questioning the validity of the Business Insider rankings, which it said could have been to drive up their readership.*

> *It later retracted this statement, released another written statement in response to the survey. Pepco spokespeople declined to answer specific questions.*

> *"While we certainly believe that this label is over the top, we have heard our customers loud and clear and are working hard to upgrade our system," the second statement said.*

Pepco's communication department certainly does not get it. You don't get rid of something by attacking the source (unless it was some muck-raking tabloid). The lesson here is that Pepco is in denial about how it is perceived by its customers. As a company, it believes that if it says that it is fixing things, people should just accept it.

To become the most hated company you have to provide bad service, first and foremost. But you compound this by:

- Thinking your customers are stupid or ignorant (read about Pepco's misguided ad campaign for instance)

- Denying that serious problems exist
- Not doing enough to address those problems, or just giving lip-service to fixing said issues.
- If criticized, pointing fingers at the source of criticism rather than dealing with the substance.

I tweeted out the WTOP article yesterday, and @pepcoconnect tweeted back: Working to get it right (with a link to this: http://pepcoconnect.wordpress.com/2011/07/11/working-to-get-it-right/) And if that is true, why on Friday night, did I lose power for one and half hours, for no apparent reason?