

Customer Service

Donna, how many of us have spent countless hours on the phone with some big company's customer service department only to be disappointed with the outcome? Some of the big ones do a great job, but it seems the vast majority stumble pretty hard. Small businesses need to take a cue from this and make sure they pay particular attention to handling their client's needs efficiently.

So many companies spend a tremendous amount of money getting clients; a lot of the time they don't spend enough time trying to keep them. Now more than ever, people are especially conscious of what they are spending and corresponding value. If your company does not provide the value and proper service, your customers will go elsewhere. Believe me...they have choices and they are simply a mouse click away.

I can remember when I started my business I actually had my mother doing customer service for me. I mean....if you can't trust your mother to handle your client's with care...who can you trust? Trust is most of what customer service is built on anyhow, isn't it? Loyal customers stay because you build their trust over a period of time. Consistency counts. At my payroll company if I only occasionally got my clients' checks done properly it would not garner much trust and I bet they would fire us pretty quickly.

There are a few things you can do to bolster your customer services:

- *Hire for attitude and teach the skills.* Yes, there has to be some guidelines in place to assure the new hire is truly capable. If you are hiring someone to process payrolls, they need basic math skills....but more importantly they have to have the proper level of interpersonal skills.
- *Set your client's expectations.* For example...don't tell your clients that you will fix any challenges in five minutes or less if it is not possible for you to do so. If you consistently fail, they will go to a competitor
- *Train and re-train.* Training someone when they come on board is vital. Keeping them on track is just as, if not, more important. Everyone falls into bad habits when left unchecked.