

CUSTOMER SERVICE TIPS FOR MAIL ORDER BUSINESS

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CUSTOMER SERVICE TIPS FOR MAIL ORDER BUSINESS

Can we be too good to our customers? No way! Our customers are the backbone of our business! They're right no matter what!

But I'm sorry to disagree with you. As small, honest and legitimate businesses _ we have a tendency to place our product quality above money. While this is the "right" way of building a strong, solid business; there are customers that will try to take advantage of you. You have to learn how to notice this possibility coming and "bow out gracefully" without losing the customer.

Remember that most newcomers to the world of mail order think that they are ordering from BIG companies just because we have a company name! They cannot conceive how poor and struggling a lot of us really are. They think we can absorb costs and because they are poor themselves, will often try and take advantage of people like us. (If they only knew the many times I have personally had to hold an order up for mailing because I couldn't afford the 52c to mail it back, or the guy who bounced a \$2 check and caused a close friend of mine to go "in the hole" \$15 in bad check charges.)

But because we are honest people who place our product ABOVE money we sometimes let people walk all over us. In fact _ a mail order buddie of mine (who distributes shareware computer disks) is normally so happy when she gets an order that she gives the customer almost 10 times more than what they pay for. She is so excited about keeping a customer that she goes overboard to make them happy.

Unfortunately, a lot of people will take advantage of this situation. They think, "Hey, if I can get this much for hardly nothing, I'll see how much more they'll give me. Look at all the "freebies" I could get and all the money I could save." They'll lose respect for you. However, this line of thinking is only short term. Sure, as a customer, you might get some more free stuff with the next order, but pretty soon the business owner will realize what's going on. Then you'll lose that business contact forever! I can still recall the people who ripped me off before and I would NEVER do business with them again! This is a sad situation!

As a dealer, you can learn to give your customers what they pay for. Go that extra mile on special requests, but never over-extend yourself if it means lost profits to your business. This line of thinking will cause you to set yourself up to be taken advantage of and then you'll become resentful toward your customers; which is bad.

Another friend of mine was so stunned by landing an on-going, monthly

publication that she promised the customer "the moon" without even having to do so. When she lived up to all her promises she ended up paying \$215 out of her own pocket to publish each issue. Of course, she had to cancel her contract forever _ which is "bad business."

In mail order we all have the ability to make ourselves look "richer" than we really are. We can work co-op deals with other people to barter and trade for things we don't have and could never pay for. Then, when orders are filled professionally, the customer suddenly thinks the mail order dealer has a lot of money to spread around and can afford to lose a few dollars on them.

If a customer does not send the correct amount for you to fill his or her order _ simply write them a nice letter explaining that they did not enclose the proper amount. Send them an invoice showing the amount they still owe and bill them before filling the order.

If someone calls you up on the phone and talks a "good" sales pitch (with the intention of getting you to fill their order before they pay you) kindly explain that your company policy is to receive payment first since they are a new customer. No other explanation is necessary.

However, don't go overboard and get crazy. If a new customer forgets to enclose a 29c stamp, go ahead and send them information. It's silly to spend another 29c stamp yourself to tell them to send a 29c stamp. And not filling the order is also crazy. If the customer cared enough to write in the first place, you at least owe them a response. Besides, it might bring a big order. Don't get hung-up over a stamp!

Some dealers refuse to take personal checks because they are afraid they will bounce. Again _ this is not good customer service since it's a lot of trouble to buy a money order when most people have checking accounts. This line of thinking will cost you lots of lost orders. However, you can hold the check for clearance before you fill the order if the amount is over \$25. Use common sense and you'll make it!