

**Key to Unforgettable Service Is Pleasing The Internal Customer**  
**By Caryn Amster and Carol Pietrus – The Marketing Coaches™**  
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Consumers have changed! According to the National Retail Merchants' Association, today's customers expect instant credit, courteous service, low prices, high quality and personal attention. And after all that, they have no loyalty.

Since it is six times more expensive to attract a new customer than to keep an old one, companies should be focused on keeping business rather than starting over.

Businesses have two types of customers, internal and external. We understand that we must satisfy our external customer, but too few realize that the key to supplying unforgettable service is pleasing the internal customer, the employee.

In today's right-sizing environment, employees are often over-worked and under-enthused. So how do employers encourage their internal customers to provide a higher level of service? Since most companies don't even try, you probably only need to give that little extra to be unforgettable.

Savvy employers know the power of "[Word of Mouth Marketing](#)". No matter how clever their advertising, impressions of a company come from what people are saying. Businesses that don't provide that little extra customer service get negative word of mouth on the street. And word of mouth doesn't come from any one thing, but is the result of many little things done day after day.

The typical dissatisfied customer will tell eight to 10 people. So customer service is not a department, it is every employee. A *U.S. News & World Report* survey showed that a whopping 64 percent of customers quit frequenting a company because of an attitude of indifference toward the customer by an owner, manager or employee.

Internal customers (employees) have a wide sphere of influence including customers, suppliers, bosses, subordinates, other employees, friends, relatives, neighbors and peers.

What are they saying about your company? If there were a problem, would you like everyone to know about it?

Turning a negative impression around starts with training internal customers. More enthusiastic and informed internal customers cause higher customer satisfaction, higher profits, greater employee rewards and lower turnover.

So, making every employee a partner in the "Word of Mouth Marketing Process" becomes more critical than ever. Steven Covey says, "If you always treat your employees exactly as you want them to treat your finest customer, they will! And... they will do it not only when you are there but when you are not there!"

We suggest these [10 steps to internal customer care](#). By the way, they also work for external customers.

- Listen
- Don't argue
- Be courteous
- Don't hide bad news
- Always tell the truth
- Never take them for granted
- Train them – invest in them
- Get back to them – respond quickly
- Learn to say “I don't know but I'll find out”
- Get, regard, value and reward their opinion

So what is the bottom line on customer service and the internal customer? Statistics show that businesses with low service quality are less profitable and lose market share compared to those with higher service quality who are much more profitable, gain market share at a rapid rate and *charge significantly higher prices*. And this can't be done without satisfying the internal customer.

“My goal is to consistently give business owners the best and latest tips, tricks and information on marketing their business,” says Caryn. Custom Marketing Associates, started in 1988, is a business-to-business marketing, advertising and public relations firm located in Elk Grove, Illinois. Amster's second business, The Marketing Coaches, specializing in speaking, training and consulting on marketing, direct mail, customer service and trade show issues, was started in 1990. For information, contact Caryn at (847) 895-6449, e-mail [Caryn@MarketingCoaches.com](mailto:Caryn@MarketingCoaches.com) and see the site at [www.MarketingCoaches.com](http://www.MarketingCoaches.com).

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