W.O.W. YOUR CUSTOMERS
MAKE THEM SMILE AND FEEL SPECIAL – 6 EXAMPLES

What is exceptional customer service anyway?

The United States Thesaurus states exceptional means outstanding, excellent, brilliant, extraordinary, or incomparable.

When was the last time you…?
… received exceptional, extraordinary, or incomparable customer service?
… were surprised or delighted by a company or service provider going beyond your expectations?
… felt important or valued after making a purchase?
… were treated so well that the service made you smile or feel special?
… you walked away saying WOW!

W. O. W stands for Wonderful, Outstanding and Way beyond what you ever expected!

In my experiences the W.O.W. factor is hard to find.

It is often said that up to 95% of businesses will fail within their first five years. If a business lacks customers, it can no longer exist. 68% of customers will leave due to the attitude or indifference of the Service. The good news is that 68% of customer retention is within our control. Read on to learn 3 reasons to provide W.O.W service, 3 companies leading in customer service and 3 personal ways that I have been W.O.W.ed.

Here are 3 big “R’ advantages for providing exceptional customer service to retain customers:

1. **Reduce Costs** - It costs us 6-7 times more to get a new customer than to keep our existing.
2. **Raise Sales** - Repeating Customers spend 67% more
3. **Recurrence generates Referrals** - A loyal customer typically will refer up to 7 people after they make 10 purchases.

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Satisfied customers stick around longer, cost less to service, and are easier to maintain. Additionally, they pay less attention to what your competitors are doing because. Conversely, dissatisfied customers tell 9-12 people about a negative experience. Often times we do not even know that our customers are unhappy because only 2% will tell you. The majority of customer switchovers occur without a customer ever telling you. Think about strong brands that have built a business around a strong customer focus… small business owners to large corporations alike can draw from the same core principles for stability and success.

Here are 3 examples of companies leading in exceptional customer service:

1. **Nordstrom's** – "offering the best possible service, selection, quality and value."
   Nordstrom's, started in 1901, has a longstanding reputation for fanatical customer service. Their entire business model revolves around sustaining a customer-focused culture. My daughter worked for Nordstrom's for several years, so I was able to observe their unmatched customer service and customer retention practices.

   Brand loyalty was ingrained in Rayna as early as her interview, when the hiring manager said, “This might be the only interview you need to go on in your entire life.” The seed was planted for a long-term career vision; pride in company was passed on. This loyalty has a positive impact on how “Nordies”, Nordstrom employees, treat the end customer.

   Nordstrom's does not have a cumbersome policy and procedure book. Their values dictate the rules:
   - Some of my favorite heroic stories are: Do what it takes to make the customer happy.
   - Use your best judgment.
   - Smile even if the customer does not deserve it.
   - Look for opportunities to be a customer hero. "Heroics" – employees who witness a colleague providing excellent customer service are encouraged to write up a description of what they saw.

   A Nordstrom's sales person delivering a suit to a time-crunched customer's hotel
   - Ironing a shirt for a customer who had a meeting that afternoon
   - Wrapping a gift for a customer that was purchased at Macy's
   - Warming a customer's car in the winter for a customer while the customer finished shopping
   - Knitting a shawl for an elderly customer who needed a special length to clear the wheel chair spokes
   - Selling a customer two different shoe sizes

   What can you do to go out of your way for your current customers? Can you make a positive connection? Make them smile? Make them laugh?

2. **Southwest Airlines** stands for freedom [to fly] and we are committed to proving our Customers something different in airline industry: everyday low fares and superior Customer Service. With this simple focus they have survived through bad times and good – price hikes, escalating fuel prices and more. They strive to be friendliest service in the sky.

   I am a fan of Southwest Airlines and some of the special ways they W.O.W me are:
   - Resisting the added baggage fees when the other airlines have
   - Sending customers an anniversary card
   - Rewarding customers with a loyalty rewards drink coupons
   - Having humor and dignity when talking to their customers in flight. Their culture has a fun spirit.

3. **Walt Disney** is a magical place that describes its environment by stating, "We create happiness."

   They capture the customer's imagination. The average family will save up to three years for a trip to Disney World. Disney World acknowledges that the guest expectations are for the park to be clean, friendly and fun. Every employee is responsible for exceeding these expectations. What do your customers expect from you? Can you creatively exceed these expectations?
You don’t need to be a Nordstrom’s, Southwest, or Disney World employee to create a W.O.W. response.

Here are 3 more W.O.W experiences that I had recently that might inspire you to think of your own W.O.W. opportunities:

4. **Amel’s Restaurant**, Pittsburgh, Pa. My husband and I returned to a restaurant that we went to when we were dating. We shared our story with our waiter—we were there visiting, we moved away, and we were there thirty years ago as boyfriend and girlfriend. Next he showed up with a glass of wine on the house for us to celebrate. After our meal, we were W.O.W. ed when the server brought a special dessert and had written (in chocolate syrup) around the plate “Welcome Back”. Last the owner came over to personally acknowledge us. We were so touched by the way they made us feel that we bought a gift certificate so that we could send our friends there.

5. **Cheesecake Factory** – During a recent business trip to the east coast, while speaking at an International Women’s Conference, myself and two other speakers had our flights cancelled. We went to dinner a little dispirited by our delay and mentioned our plight to the server. She quickly empathized and offered us to stay at her home. We did not accept however yet were touched by her response.

We wanted to share an entrée. Whereas some establishments charge a fee for meal-shares or simply ban it, our waitress offered us another piece of fish to make our meal share-able without requiring us to order more than we wanted. Her general attitude was so accommodating that I reported to her manager that she had exceeded our expectations. He replied, “That is great to know, because we reward our staff with a free dinner certificate each time a customer compliments them. And they get a free meal for each compliment.”

6. **Fed Ex Kinkos** – I was making a display board for a presentation and was having difficulty mounting the items on my display board. The employee saw that I was having trouble. In seeing this, he promptly helped me measure my board and equipped me with the right adhesive. It took longer than both of us thought so when the employee said “we normally charge for this service however this time I will not,” I was certainly impressed. I would have gladly paid for his time however the fact that he went out of his way without charging made me want to tell everyone.

FedEx Kinkos is not the least expensive place to get copies however I happily pay a little more in a pinch because of their service. They have saved me so many times in a pinch before a presentation. I have sent them documents in the middle of the night that needed finished and delivered by morning. It is a good idea to build a relationship with your local Fed Ex Kinkos.

About a week later, I got a follow up call with a short survey about my experience. On a scale from 1 to 10 they wanted to know if I was satisfied with the service I had received. They got a perfect 10+ plus from me.

Each of these examples W.O.W.’d me. They found a way to deliver Nordstrom, Disney and Southwest level of service by paying attention to my needs and making me smile and feel special. They gave me more than what I was expecting and they were memorable.

*Remember your customers and be memorable to your customers.*

Consider the varieties of ways you can reach someone in a personal way… by letter, email, phone, face to face. How can you create a W.O.W experience?

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**Sources:**
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2. *Harvard Business Review*
3. *Bain and Company, 2002*

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In my experiences the W.O.W. factor is hard to find. Read on to learn 3 advantages to providing exceptional customer service, 3 examples of leaders in customer service, and 3 personal examples of companies that W.O.W.ed me. Get inspired to make your customers smile and feel special.

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**About The Author**
Barb Girson, International Direct Selling Industry expert, trainer and coach, is a highly interactive, creative speaker & author offering professional skill development programs for workshops, leader retreats, and annual conventions & teleclass sales training programs. Custom programs /Coaching 1:1 available.

Barb Girson helps companies, teams & entrepreneurs gain confidence, get into action, & most importantly... grow sales. To sign up for her next FREE sales training teleclass / join her free email list & get 'Sales Strategies that Stick' ezine, Visit [http://www.MySalesTactics.com](http://www.MySalesTactics.com) to learn more.

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