



Customer Service - What Does It Really Mean?

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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This week I travelled to Calgary Alberta for a Conference that begins tomorrow. While I was eating lunch in the restaurant, I received a telephone call that my uncle had died this morning. At first, I was just shocked. Then, as the day went on, the emotions started to hit me. I went to my room and cried.

When evening came, I thought perhaps I should go to the dining room for something to eat. I ended up crying again and explained to the server why I hadn't finished my meal.

She was wonderful!

First, she kindly expressed her condolences. Then she listened while I talked about how much my uncle has meant to me. She explained that she understood the importance of family and how difficult it can be for her because she lives in Canada while most of her relatives live in Tibet.

She offered to have me try some of the Italian deserts that were featured and then packaged my meal so I could take it back to the room.

A few minutes later the other server came to my table and he, too, offered kind words. He encouraged me to be strong for the next few days when I will be autographing books for attendees at the Conference and serving them as a member of the Board of Directors.

When I asked for the bill, I was told that there would be no charge.

I have been thinking about how important this couple of individuals has been in the customer service plan of the large hotel chain that is housing me. They offered genuine kindness after recognizing the situation of their customer and then did what they could to try to make the situation better. Their actions were not from a policy manual and not just on a financial level. They actually connected at a very practical and human level.

Customer service is not just about reacting to problems or complaints about products and services. It is about understanding your customers, building a bridge with them and helping them to get through difficult times - even when there really isn't anything that your business can do to solve a problem that the customer might be experiencing at the time.

I talked with the hotel manager so that he would know how much I appreciated the kindness of these two staff members. My comment was "This is a good place to be when there's trouble".

Sometimes we are surprised by life events that strongly affect us when we are right in the middle of commitments that we need to fulfill. We might not have family or familiar surroundings to comfort us.

At times like these, it is very important that we are in places where customer service is a priority.

Today I am thankful that this hotel knows how to provide it with finesse.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if every business was so good at giving excellent customer service? It would certainly make the world a better place!