



Whatever Happened to Customer Service

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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One of my grandsons lives in another province so I decided to purchase a gift certificate for his twelfth birthday. A young man at the far away city's music store answered the telephone. I introduced myself, explained the reason for my call and stated that my son would pick up the certificate as the birthday party was only two days away.

The clerk asked for my grandson's name and then put me on hold for several minutes. When he returned he asked if I recognized a specific telephone number that he read to me. I didn't. He then announced that my grandson didn't have an account with them and that he couldn't do the transaction unless he did. "He's only twelve years old" I answered "but he's been taking guitar lessons with you for more than two years". I was immediately put on hold again.

During the next segment of the conversation I was told that my son had an account and they could put a gift certificate in his name. It wasn't his birthday!

Then the clerk wanted to verify the address so they could mail the certificate. Again I explained that my son was picking it up. I couldn't believe my ears when the fellow then said "Well we have the certificates at the front desk so your son can just come in and purchase one himself!"

I was forcing myself to be polite and replied "But I am going to pay for it". "How are you going to do that?" he asked. "With my credit card" I stated. "Then I will need your credit card number" he told me. No kidding!

His last statement was "Tell your son to come in and if he is having any problems getting the certificate he should ask for me". He didn't offer his name (but I wasn't hanging up without it) and I certainly didn't trust him to call my son to arrange the pickup so made another call for that purpose.

Google search defines "service" as "work done by one person or group that benefits another" and "an act of help or assistance". Maybe I'm wrong but I think that the definitions should include listening carefully to what an individual is saying, talking politely, serving the person in a timely manner and doing as much as possible to avoid causing frustration in the process.

It is annoying when we don't receive good service. We expect it when we are dealing with businesses.

Each of us is also, however, in the "business" of life and it is interesting to think about how others would rate the "service" that we give them.

Are we good listeners for our friends? Do we take the time necessary to problem-solve with our children? Would family members state that they are satisfied with the attention we offer? Do our words convey politeness and respect for those around us?

In other words, do we offer good, quality service to others? If not, it's time to make some changes! You see it's the little things that make the difference.