

# The Ruby Secret

By T. Scott Gross

There must be a jillion factors that shape buying decisions. Price is the one that we sometimes think is the most important of all. But then there is location, quality, convenience, and even weather can sometimes send customers to your door.

If there was one thing that would consistently bring you loyal customers, would you be interested in knowing what it is? And what if I told you that it is something that you can provide at little or no cost? Better yet, what if by providing it, not only would your sales increase but so would your ability to enjoy going to work? You'd probably want to know.

If you guessed that employees who give great, call it positively outrageous customer service, then you are right on target. Since we identified the attributes of Positively Outrageous Service, there has never been a question that it is the kind of service that customers want and smart business people want to provide.

Nope, the big question has always been, "How in the world can you get ordinary folks to deliver this positively outrageous service stuff?"

## First, a Story or Two

The best/worse service in the world comes in the form of a waitress at a Holiday Inn in California. Her name is Ruby and the odds of getting served in the same month that you order are somewhere between slim and none. Yet, try

and get a seat in Ruby's station any day of the week and be prepared to wait. Folks come from miles around to sample the loving abuse that Ruby serves along with the quiche and salads.

Her secret? Well, she just loves her customers...and she has a boss who must dearly love her. Get that? Two conditions. First, someone who has what consultant Ron Zemke calls high customer tolerance, the ability to tolerate, even thrive on lots and lots of customer contact. It should seem obvious but it's not.

Not everyone, even some very nice folks, have the psychological make-up that will allow them to handle one customer after another without going absolutely nuts. You have to find the Ruby's, those lovers of people, and then give them the freedom to love on their customers as they see fit.

But the Rubys of the world won't perform for just anyone. Take it from me. I've had dozens of servers and desk clerks and flight attendants and salespersons confide in me that their bosses are just plain awful. And I have never, ever had great service from employees who are not themselves well served.

So part two of the formula...to the Rubys of the world you must add a great boss if you intend to deliver Positively Outrageous Service.

Don Hix is a name that comes to my mind when I think about great bosses. A technical expert? A master of details? Nope. But it just so happened that he loved and served his customers as well as the Rubys love and serve theirs.

What Don knew for certain was that his customers were not the folks who came in the front door and stood obediently by the cash register. No, Don's customers came in the back door, tied on an apron, and then punched the time clock.

Don never stepped into the middle of work. He stood off to the side coaching from time to time but never interfered. He would actually knock before entering a work area saying, "Do you mind if I come in?" Of course, Don was the boss and we all knew it. Knocking and asking our permission was just his way of letting us know that he respected our work and trusted that we had things under control.

Don was a master at hiring Rubys, training them in the technical aspects of his business and then getting out of their way while they set about loving on the customers. Now, if it sounds like this Don fellow was a very nice man, you are dead right.

On the other hand, if Don ever came to the conclusion that he had made a poor hiring decision and that all the training and coaching in the world would not bring another Ruby to the team, he

would cut you out like a cancer rather than allowing it to infect the rest of his cherished crew.

**The Moral of the Story?**

Hire Rubys! Folks who just love customers.

Train them in your way of doing business then let them love on the customers the way they feel most comfortable.

Be absolutely ruthless when it is time to exorcise a bad hire.

The reward will be customers who are undyingly loyal. Who will honor you with their business even if they are unable to completely explain why.

The same will be true of your team. They, in turn, will honor you with their loyalty. Just remember...there will be no Rubys to love on your customers unless there are managers willing to lead the way, serve first and best.