

What To Do?

By T. Scott Gross

Is it possible that you too, have in at least a small way, created a system that puts the customer second?

Our restaurant was located within a few hundred yards of the site of the annual Fourth of July fireworks display. Nearly everyone in our little town as well as the populations of a half dozen surrounding small towns would turn out for the big event.

The show started at “dark-thirty” on the fourth. If you didn’t arrive at least two hours early your chance of a reasonable parking space were somewhere between slim and none. By the time the first blast shook the building and drew a collective “ooooohhh!” from the waiting crowd, our parking lot was gridlocked. The drive-thru self-imploded and was useful for little more than walk-up traffic, which was considerable.

The most popular service we offered was the restroom. About 30 minutes after our first surge of large drink orders, the line began to form. Through the dining room, out the door, and into the parking lot the line of the needy snaked impatiently.

One Fourth of July, a new employee, who had been assigned to keep the dining room looking good, rushed into the kitchen to report, “We’d better do something! There are tons of people in line to use our restroom and they aren’t all customers! What should I do?”

What do you think was the answer? “Tell them that restrooms are for guests only?” No!!! “Make sure that there is plenty of TP and that the place is immaculate. And, while you are at it, take them some courtesy

drinks and a few samples of chicken tenders!”

Thinking Point

What can you do to make sure that customers are more important than systems?

Walk through your business as though you were a customer. Start with your Yellow Pages ad. Have you made it easy for your customers to know where you are, what you do, and why you are different from the competition? Is there anything in your ad to hint that customers are not first, such as limited hours of operation?

Call your place of business. Is the phone answered by a computer or a person? Is it easy to get to the people who can solve a customer’s problem?

Are your people playing bigshot and leaving their phones on voice mail all day or do they answer their phones personally within a ring or two? Do they pick up the receiver or immediately push the speakerphone button?

Is the product easy to touch, try on, or try out? Are salespeople easy to find and friendly once found? Do you offer a variety of methods of payment? Do you have to wait in line? Is there enough staff on duty to serve customers quickly?

Thinking Point

How could you make it easy to do business with you?