



Clients & Prospects Expect Accuracy & Punctuality

THE DAYS WHEN PEOPLE WOULD PATIENTLY WAIT A WEEK OR TWO FOR A PRODUCT TO ARRIVE ARE LONG GONE AND FEW ARE WILLING TO FORGIVE EVEN SMALL ERRORS, YET MANY MANY ORGANIZATIONS IMPLEMENT POLICIES THAT AGGRAVATE THEIR PATRONS.

“Problems cannot be solved at the same level of consciousness that created them” is attributed to Albert Einstein. He was a clever man who probably would have known enough to call a schlimbe a schlimbe, and to avoid them altogether.

What’s a schlimbe? Hold that thought! We’ll get back to schlimmbes over there in the third column, but first ...

Customers Resent Poor Service

THAT SHOULD BE SELF EVIDENT, BUT SOMETIMES IT SEEMS NOT TO BE.

Marketing guru and author Ray Jutkins guided my understanding of customer service, and one of the concepts Ray promoted was “Do it the way the customer wants.” That was non-negotiable, and he was also a big fan of money-back guarantees. I think he would have been an opponent of schlimmbes.

Ray said that giving customers the level of service they expect is essential, and giving them even more than they expect is better. But “when you give 110%, you will not always get 110% back.” Still, it was the best way Ray knew to build customer loyalty.

“Loyalty is tough to build and tougher to keep,” he said. “The customer wants you to make a commitment, so make the commitment! You have no choice: Do what the customer wants and the customer might stick around. Fail, and the customer will go away. This has nothing to do with right or wrong; it has everything to do with dialogue.”

WHY DO SO MANY ORGANIZATIONS CREATE POLICIES THAT ANNOY CLIENTS AND PROSPECTS?



Part of the commitment has to be availability because we operate on internet time now. Before clocks, people regulated time by the sun and stars. Long-term events depended on the seasons. Now clients expect you to be available even when you’re not available. A question posed on your website Friday afternoon can’t wait until Monday for a reply.

After moving from Los Angeles to Roll, Arizona, Ray lived in a house at the end of a long dirt that extended several miles from where a sign said “Pavement Ends”. Roll is about 30 miles east of Yuma and has one traffic signal.

From that location, Ray ran a consulting business that took him to every continent but Antarctica, and he did it by avoiding schlimmbes, even though he probably never heard the word.

Schlimmbes Be Gone!

CHANCES ARE THAT EINSTEIN NEVER USED THE WORD, SCHLIMMBE, IN PART BECAUSE IT DIDN’T EXIST UNTIL WELL AFTER EINSTEIN HAD DIED.

Schlimmbe is Arden Berkovitz’s abbreviation for the German word *Schlimmbesserung*, which Google Translate defines as “get better soon.”

Berkovitz uses the abbreviation to mean “any *improvement* that makes things worse.” I’ve seen Berkovitz’s amazing Einstein impersonation a few times, and each time he reminded me that all organizations have problems. It’s the solutions that differentiate the winners from the losers.

So when Berkovitz quotes Einstein’s “Problems cannot be solved at the same level of consciousness that created them,” it’s his way of reminding us to think outside the box.

Bercovitz has studied Einstein, who considered himself to be *not very bright, but extremely curious*. “I have no special talents, I am only passionately curious.”

Most people today think of Einstein as a genius and forget about the curiosity that Einstein himself felt was responsible for his successes.

The Schlimmbe Trap

BERKOVITZ OFFERS AN EXAMPLE OF A SCHLIMMBE: THE DISPOSABLE FOAM DRINKING CUP.

They were initially innovative and inexpensive, but they turned out to be virtually indestructible. “Like gum stuck to the bottom of our shoes, their lifetime environmental impact far outlives their utility.”

Bercovitz says organizations must establish a “no schlimmbe” policy to cultivate a group consciousness that roots out anything that even hints of a schlimmbe and helps everyone to focus on specific results and to avoid personal attacks in meetings.

All too often, organizations create procedures and policies for their own benefit, not that of clients and customers. If a business has ever sent you a message that contains the words “for your convenience”, you doubtless know that whatever follows will not be *for your convenience*.

A complaint about an internet service provider described how the writer’s account had been closed. He had moved and sent an address change notice to the company. Later, he couldn’t log on, so he called the ISP and they said, “You ordered the account shut down.” How could anyone read an address-change letter and interpret it as a request to close the account?

Recently I’ve been involved in a tussle with my internet service provider, Wide Open West. I’m supposed to have a 100Mbps download speed and 10Mbps upload speed.

Routinely, but intermittently, the download speed drops to about 5Mbps and the upload speed to 1Mbps or less. Sometimes to 0Mbps.

Unfortunately, WOW’s support people seem to be forbidden from going beyond what’s in the script in front of them. They can’t propose solutions even though some of them doubtless have sufficient knowledge to do so.

The support people say that speeds are limited by the 2.4GHz Wi-Fi band. That’s true, but I don’t use the 2.4GHz band. When I perform a speed test, it’s on a computer that’s connected to the router by an Ethernet cable.

When I remind the tech support person that the computer is hard wired to the router, and remind them of a previous problem with similar symptoms – a problem that was resolved when they finally sent a technician who found that the cable from the pole to the house needed to be replaced, they respond by repeating that it could be a Wi-Fi problem.

A story that may well be apocryphal involves a woman who calls her bank to protest a \$35 credit card late fee. Claiming that the fee is excessive and punitive, she says that it can’t possibly cost the bank \$35 when her check is a day late. The bank’s customer service representative replies that the charge is justified because of the cost of “dealing with all the people who call to protest the charges.”

Circular reasoning: See “Reasoning, circular.”

A bank that I no longer do business with took two years to change my address, and did so only when I wrote to one of the VPs downtown to explain that I was concerned that the bank was having such trouble with

basic record keeping. I never received a reply, but the address was fixed.

Extreme Service is Expected

WHEN I ATTENDED A PROGRAM HOSTED BY THE DIRECT MARKETING ASSOCIATION AND THE US POSTAL SERVICE IN NEW YORK CITY, RAY JUTKINS SAID “EXTREME IS EXPECTED.”

He explained that customers expect maximum performance, extreme service, and uncommon value. “When you add value over and above their expectations, you win. Put the customer first and you are much more likely to stay first yourself. You can’t just *get by* any more.”

Convenience stores charge high prices, offer mediocre service, and have limited selections, but still succeed. Why? Because they provide the value of convenience.

Accuracy is critical, too. Many people would consider 99.9% success to excellent, but an electric utility with 99.9% uptime would leave you without power for 1 minute and 26 second every single day.

Customers expect 100% accuracy. They expect each and every one of us to do our jobs accurately, on time, and maybe even with a smile.

Is this asking too much? I think not. 🤖