

Customer Service Strategies from Retail Leaders

Kemba Dunham, “Beyond Satisfaction,” *The Wall Street Journal*, October 30, 2006.

Joyce Smith, “Positive Customer Service Pays Off,” *Myrtle Beach Sun News*, November 05, 2006.

Customer Service is a vital aspect of successful retailing. Many companies have different strategies and ways to define the best way to treat its customers. Customer service retail leaders create strategies that are executed via its sales people. Customers that receive good customer service can be an important marketing tool for retailers because they spread their positive opinion about the retailers to friends, family, and even strangers over the Internet.

JetBlue Airways does not have a customer service department, not because it does not believe in servicing its customers, but because every employee is in customer service and ready to help any customer. This company views itself as a customer-service company that flies planes. One innovative strategy that this company uses is to survey at least six customers from every flight to get their opinions about their experience. This type of information helps the company stay in-tune with what the customer is thinking on a day-to-day basis and can track changes in customer preferences. For example, they learned that customers like pilots to address passengers at the beginning of the flight, especially when there is a delayed departure.

Pulte Homes, of Michigan, has also taken customer service to another level. This company not only surveys its customers after the purchase of their first home, but continues to survey them throughout their ownership in that home. Its customer relations department values its customer and invests in a life-long relationship with them. As a result, Pulte has seen a large increase in the growth of its repeat and referral business in the last five years.

Similarly, Dell Inc., the personal computer maker, is concerned with their customers' experience over the duration of ownership. The company focuses on the customer experience, which includes the ordering process, the set up process, usability of the product, and reliability over time. All of these aspects are important to the customer and thus, Dell has invested \$150 million in 2006 to improving customers' experience.

Costco Wholesale Corp. the warehouse-style retail stores with bulk items at discount prices, defines customer service differently than other service retailers. Customers value the self-service aspects of their stores and the ability to find good values. Its customers like to shop in the store without being bothered by sales people.

Since customer service starts with management, it is important for salespeople to effectively communicate what they have learned from customers everyday. Since salespeople are the ones that make buying decisions with customers, it is important that

the company treats the employees as they would like the employees to in turn treat its customers.