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Sears Takes Care of Their Reservists Called to Active Duty

Employees of Sears, Roebuck & Company who are military reservists are being treated to an extra helping of thanks from the company. An email recently circulated over the Internet talks about the extra step the national department store has taken.

The law requires all businesses to hold jobs open and available for reservists who are called to active duty, but those who are called up usually take a big pay cut and lose benefits from their companies. Sears has taken a different position.

Sears is voluntarily paying the difference in salaries and maintaining all benefits, including medical insurance and bonus programs, for all its called up reservist employees, and doing that for up to two years.

A skeptical recipient of the news decided to go to the source to check it out. The customer sent an email to the Sears Customer Service Department. It said:

"I received this email, and I would like to know if it is true. If it is, the Internet may have just become one very good source of advertisement for your store. I know I would go out of my way to buy products from Sears instead of another store for a like item even if it was cheaper at the other store."

Sears answered with this:

"Dear Customer: Thank you for contacting Sears. The information is factual. We appreciate your positive feedback. Sears regards service to our country as one of the greatest sacrifices our young men and women can make. We are happy to do our part to lessen the burden they bear at this time. Bill Thorn, webcenter@sears.com."

Congratulations to a retailer who goes beyond the call of the law.

In Other News...

Craftsman tools and Kenmore appliances are going to be starring in an ABC series called *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*.

The popular appliances and tools will team with the popular trend in home decorating shows that are popping up all over television.

This show's particular twist is that the production company of the show, Endemol Entertainment USA, chooses a family who has had some hard knocks and treats them to an extensive house renovation. As with most of the design shows, viewers will be treated to the before, during and after renovations.

There was a premiere show on December 3. The debut of the regular series is planned for January or February, 2004.

Seen & Noted

Workplace Trends

According to the Society for Human Resource Management/Workplace Forecast, the top ten workplace trends are:

- Use of technology to communicate with employees.
- Rising health care costs.
- Increased vulnerability of intellectual property.
- Management talent.
- Greater demand for high-skilled workers than for low-skilled workers.
- Labor shortage.
- Change from manufacturing to an information/service economy.
- Increase in employment-related government.
- Focus on domestic safety and security.
- Ability to use technology to more closely monitor employees.

Source: "Quick Bites," by Sam Geist. 800-567-1861. <http://www.samgeist.com>.

Shoplifting – A Growth Industry

Almost 23 million people steal from retail stores every year. Many of them are part of a \$13 billion underground industry. Even though retailers devise more methods to slow the shoplifter, the numbers continue to grow. The *Virginia-Pilot* newspaper has compiled these statistics.

Statistics

- The Food Marketing Institute says a typical shoplifter can steal between \$200,000 and \$1 million worth of products every year.
- In 1996, the FBI had three theft task forces nationwide. Today, the agency has 15.
- Shoplifters say they are caught an average of once for every 49 times they steal, according to a Retail Theft Trends Report.
- Security experts predict that the record number of prison releases scheduled for the next few years will swell the ranks of those willing to work as professional shoplifters.
- In April, federal agents seized \$135,000 worth of stolen infant formula from a rental truck, storage units and residences in Raleigh, NC.
- Drug dealers often use powdered infant formula to cut cocaine.

- In 1999 in Atlanta, an FBI-led sting called Operation American Dream broke up a \$10 million retail theft ring that was shipping goods via UPS to buyers in New York and Baltimore.

Shoplifter Preferences

- The United States doesn't track brands individually, but surveys in Europe say Gillette razors and blades were the most stolen retail items in 2001.
- Shoplifters have swiped Bibles from Heaven & Earth, apparently ignoring the eighth commandment.
- One professional shoplifter caught by Target Corp. said he made \$120,000 to \$150,000 cash per year. He never worked on the weekend, he said, and took vacation from Thanksgiving to Christmas.
- There is no profile for the average shoplifter. Men and women steal about equally as often.
- December and March are the biggest months for shoplifting. Saturdays are the most popular day. Sundays are the least popular.

The Six Cardinal Rules of Customer Service

By Nancy Friedman

Although International Customer Service Week is in October, we at Telephone Doctor like to celebrate customer service all year—24/7/365. We urge you to celebrate customer service week all year, too. To help you, here are the Telephone Doctor's six cardinal rules for customer service. Any one of these tips will enhance your customer service reputation.

People Before Paperwork

How many times have you stood and waited while someone tallied up a batch of figures or counted a pile of money? Then, only after the person was done were you asked, "Now, how can I help you?" And how many times have you waited while someone fiddled with something or wrote up a note before acknowledging you? Paper can wait. People should not. Paper won't walk away, but a customer might. Drop what you're doing, and pay immediate attention to the customer.

Don't be Too Busy to Be Nice

In most interviews, managers and owners hear something like this from the applicant: "I love to be busy. If I'm not busy, I get bored and unhappy."

Then we hire the person, and one of the first things we hear is the complaint, "WOW, I am sooooo busy." Well, being busy does not give you carte blanche to be rude. Let's not be too busy to be nice. It's not worth it.

Rushing Threatens Customers

Whether it's on the phone or in person, avoid rushing people. Make each experience a great one. And remember, one-word answers make you sound cold and unfriendly. Slow down. Smell the roses. Stop rushing people. It threatens them.

Don't Use Military Language on Civilians

Simply put, company jargon should stay within your company. Mistakes and miscommunications thrive on company jargon. You'll be far more familiar and comfortable with the terms and abbreviations than your customer will. Some companies seem to have words and abbreviations that would make the CIA green with envy. Use simple, easy-to-understand words with customers. They'll appreciate your thoughtfulness.

Be Friendly Before You Know Who It Is

Have you ever been a customer and been treated in a rather average—maybe even below average—manner? And when the clerk realized you were a friend of the boss or someone other than an "average" customer, he brightened up? Why wait to be friendly? Why discriminate? If you're friendly before you know who it is, you'll make a whole lot of extra good points. When you're friendly before you know who it is, you're delivering the same great service to everyone. That's the way it should be. Don't discriminate.

"There ya go" is not "Thank you." "Uh huh" is not "You're welcome."

Starting today, and just for one day, count how many times people forget to say thank you and you're welcome to you. "There ya go," just doesn't hack it. When customers spend money, they want to hear

a big smiling THANK YOU, WE APPRECIATE YOUR BUSINESS. And when we, as customers, say thank you, we don't want to be grunted at with the old, uh-huh. Speak clearly. "You're welcome," is a wonderful phrase. Please use it more often. And don't be a grunter. When your customer tells you thank you, give him or her a great big smiling, "You're welcome."

From ©Telephone Doctor, Inc. Telephone Doctor® is a twenty-year old company that has helped over 20,000 organizations improve the way they communicate with customers. Nancy Friedman is a keynote speaker at association conferences and corporate gatherings and is the author of four best-selling books. For more information, go to the Telephone Doctor® website at www.telephonedoctor.com, or call 314-291-1012.

Welcome Customers Who Come to Call

If customers visit your workplace on a regular basis, make them feel special with a "welcome board." Post names of the day's visitors on a board near your reception area. In addition to giving customers a small boost when they walk through the door, a welcome board alerts people in your company who may need to talk to the customers but haven't been told about their visit.

From Sales Management Report, 800-878-5331, www.ragan.com.

Food Handlers Must Register With the FDA

If your business manufactures, processes, packs or holds food for human or animal consumption in the United States, your business is required to register with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). These rules are part of the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act that Congress passed after the September 11 attack. Following is information on the registration requirements.

Who Must Register?

- Except as discussed below, owners, operators or agents in charge of domestic or foreign facilities that manufacture, process, pack or hold food for human or animal consumption in the United States are required to register with the FDA.
- Domestic facilities are required to register whether or not food from the facility enters interstate

commerce.

- Foreign facilities that manufacture/process, pack or hold food also are required to register unless food from that facility undergoes further processing (including packaging) by another foreign facility before the food is exported to the United States. However, if the subsequent foreign facility performs only a minimal activity, such as putting on a label, both facilities are required to register.
- There is no registration fee. Registration deadline is December 2003.

Who is Exempt?

- Those who do not have to register include: farms; retailers; restaurants; nonprofit food establishments; some types of fishing vessels; facilities that are regulated exclusively by USDA's Food Safety Inspection

Service (such as facilities that only handle meat, poultry and some egg products that are regulated by USDA); and facilities that manufacture/process, pack or hold food contact substances or pesticide materials.

- U.S. Club stores that sell 51 percent or more of their food products to consumers are also exempt from the registration requirement.
- Warehouses **are not** exempt.

How to Register

Facilities that are required to register can do so by mail on paper form or on a CD-ROM, by fax or via the Internet at FDA's website, <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~furls/ovffreg.html>. You can also find further information about the provisions of this act and registration information at this site.

Source: Food Marketing Institute

NSC Drops Out of Ergonomics Group

The National Safety Council (NSC) has withdrawn as secretariat to the Accredited Standard Committee Z365 on Management of Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders for the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). NSC spent 13 years and about \$500,000 working on a voluntary ergonomics standard, which saw only the issuance in the mid-1990s of one highly criticized draft document.

ANSI rules are supposed to represent a consensus, says a spokesperson for the International Mass Retail Association (IMRA), but they and other business groups said that the ANSI effort was dominated by advocates of OSHA's ergonomics rule. IMRA joined representatives of other industries in raising objections and pursuing internal appeals against the NSC-moderated effort.

ANSI may seek to replace NSC, and NSC has still to decide whether to release the materials that the Z365 Committee developed.

Cloning Animals for Food

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has given a tentative OK to milk and meat produced by cloned animals. The agency has concluded that it is safe for human consumption. This is only a tiny step towards marketing and doesn't mean cloned food will be on the grocery shelves soon.

At this stage, cloning an animal can cost about \$20,000. That would make for an expensive steak. The likely use of a cloning will be to create a breeding program of prized animals.

United Airlines Puts Passengers in Touch with the Internet

If you're flying United Airlines, you can use in-flight email and instant messaging while in the friendly skies. United plans on offering these abilities by the end of this year. It will be the first commercial carrier to offer two-way email capability on domestic flights.

Passengers will be able to plug in their laptops to jacks on Verizon Airfone handsets to transmit emails.

United's JetConnect service has been available on a trial basis on about 700 domestic aircraft for the last year offering instant messaging, one-way text messaging and select news, weather and other information. Jet Connect will now also offer email, which will give passengers the ability to send and receive email, including attachments.

The connection is expensive, at



a cost of \$14.98 per flight, with 10 cents added for each kilobyte of data over 2 kilobytes, but United considers it a service that business travelers will want to use.

For the last year, other airlines, Lufthansa, Japan Airlines, British Airways and Scandinavia Airlines System, have experimented with or committed to using satellite high-speed Internet service.

Permanent Internet Access Tax Ban Fails

Congress failed to pass a permanent ban on taxing Internet access. There has been a temporary ban since 1998, which has to be renewed each year. That expired on November 1, but the House and Senate have been at odds about passing a permanent ban.

Last month, the Senate postponed a vote on a measure that would make the temporary ban permanent after sponsors agreed to extend the temporary prohibition. At issue is whether or not to include high-speed digital subscriber line, or DSL, services from the permanent prohibition.

Proponents of the ban want to include Internet services like DSL, cable and wireless products like hand-held BlackBerry devices. Opponents say states stand to lose \$4 billion to \$9 billion in revenue by 2006 if the ban includes other technologies. They argue that it's no longer necessary to protect the Internet because it's now a thriving industry, not a struggling start-up technology.

• Seminars •

January – 2004

NRF's 93rd Annual Convention & Expo

January 11 - 14, 2004

New York, NY

Contact: 800-NRF-HOW2

IMRA Logistics 2004

January 11- 14, 2004

Orlando, FL

Contact: rasher@imra.org

IMRA Leadership Forum

January 25 - 27, 2004

Scottsdale, AZ

Contact: Jenny Keehan,

jkeehan@imra.org

February – 2004

IMRA/FMI Markettechnics 2004

February 28 - March 2, 2004

San Francisco, CA

Contact: media@fmi.org

March – 2004

IMRA Marketing Conference

March 24 - 26, 2004

Orlando, FL

Contact: rasher@imra.org

April – 2004

IMRA Loss Prevention, Auditing & Safety Conference

April 13 - 16, 2004

Dallas, TX

Contact: rasher@imra.org

May – 2004

FMI Financial Executive Conference

May 23 - 26, 2004

Orlando, FL

Contact: psrinko@fmi.org or call

202-220-0705

Abbreviations

FMI • Food Marketing Institute

IMRA • International Mass Retail Assn.

NRF • National Retail Federation

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• Membership in RAN Required •

Important information for SIG members

The NRS governing self insured groups requires notifying members of all new members to the Group. New members for NRNSIG from October 7 to November 4, 2003, are listed below. For a complete member list, please call RAN at 775-882-1700. Please Note: Due to the many new members added each month to NRNSIG, we are unable to list all members on this page.

NRNSIG

2000 Sofa Factory
A & B Printing
Action Cleaning
Aircraft Tool & Maintenance
Equipment, Inc.
Arby's
Arrow Dump Trailers, LLC
Big O Tires #28850
Big O Tires #28857
Big O Tires #28863
Big O Tires #28864
Big O Tires #28866
Big O Tires #28862
Big O Tires #28865
deArrieta Insurance Agency

Dos Amigos - Elko
Dos Amigos - Winnemucca
Good Morning Furniture
Hunton Partners Co.
James G. Kinard, DDS CHTD
Joshua M. Landish, Ltd.
Nevada ATM Service & Sales
North Hills Dental Group, Inc.
P.C.A.'s of Nevada, Inc.
Paradigm Cleaning Services
Pro Handyman Corp.
Summit 76
Valley Pool & Pond Care, LLC
Village Pharmacy, Inc.
Wild Orchid

NRNSIG members who wish to register a negative vote on a new group member, please write NRNSIG at 810 E. Fifth Street, Suite A, Carson City, NV 89701, indicating which member and the reason(s) for the negative vote.

Membership Information

Find out more about RAN's self insured group.
Call Willie Kerschner, 775-720-8125 or the RAN office at 775-882-1700
(Toll-free in Nevada – 800-690-5959).
Don't forget to check out our website, www.RANNV.org.



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Managing Snapshot Feedback

Research Explores the Role Employees Play in Controlling Supervisors' Informal Feedback

By James Larsen, Ph. D.

Imagine this scene: A teenage boy is clearing off a table in a restaurant. His arms are piled high with dirty dishes, and suddenly, a half-full parfait dish tumbles off the stack and shatters on the floor, splattering white, gooey blobs of melted ice cream and splinters of glass on the legs of customers seated nearby.

What a catastrophe!

Now, look at the scene again, but this time slow the action down and notice where the boy's attention goes at the moment that he knows there will be a disaster. The boy glances at his supervisor and notices two things—first, that she sees the catastrophe, and second, that she has a decidedly distressed look on her face.

This is called snapshot feedback, and it occurs dozens of times each day. It's composed of two elements: first, a supervisor and an employee both notice an action of the employee, and second, the supervisor has an emotional reaction to it, which the employee notices. In the example above, the boy noticed that the supervisor saw the accident, and he noticed that she was distressed by it.

Snapshot feedback is extremely important to employees. It gives them daily guidance about their performance, and it combines over time to form the recommendations found on annual performance reviews, salary increases, and promotion requests. Indeed, it is so important that Sherry Moss, from Florida International University, believed that employees must have well-defined strategies to try to control it. She decided to conduct a research study to find out if she was right. She was right; they do.

She worked with 33 participants

in an executive MBA program at a major university and asked them to recount personal examples of both outstanding and poor performance. Then she explored their reactions to this performance. She looked especially for examples of behaviors that called their supervisors' attention to their performance when it was good, excused or mitigated the performance

if it was poor, or concealed the performance from the supervisor if it was poor.

Her findings surprised her. She expected that most the examples of these employees' efforts to manage snapshot feedback would fall into the first category, calling attention to their good performance. But it turned out that the most efforts fell into the second category, excusing or mitigating poor performance. The third category was also a surprise. In one-third of all the instances of poor performance her executive MBA students cited, they attempted to manage the snapshot feedback they received by concealing the performance or concealing themselves through avoiding their supervisors altogether.

She also expected to find that her respondents would tend to use both mitigating and avoidance strategies when their performance was poor, but again she was surprised. They tended to use one or the other, but not both.

These findings clearly worried her.

Her MBA students were competent, high achieving people, yet in many of their instances of

poor performance, they concealed the facts from their supervisors. Poor performance that fails to come to the attention of supervisors is performance that isn't corrected, and that may well impact the entire business. Moss worries that this concealment is widespread and has recommendations for us to respond to it.

Poor performance that fails to come to the attention of supervisors is performance that isn't corrected, and that may well impact the entire business.

First, she suggests that supervisors pay attention to employees' efforts to manage snapshot feedback and notice if the second category, mitigating or excusing poor performance, is absent. In her study, it was the most common. If it's absent, it means that employees are tending to conceal poor performance. They're reluctant to inform their supervisors of their own poor performance by offering an excuse or apologizing, and they're choosing, instead, to conceal it.

Second, she suggests that supervisors develop ways of offering snapshot feedback that encourages employees to be open about problems rather than to avoid snapshot feedback because they fear the employer's reaction. She challenges supervisors to learn ways to use snapshot feedback so employees will be more willing to reveal poor performance when it occurs.

Reference: Moss, Sherry E., Enzo Valenzi, and William Taggart (2003) "Are you Hiding from Your Boss?" *Journal of Management*, 29(4), 487-510.

C2003 Management Resources

Washington Watch



OECD to fight International fraud—The Internet has opened the door to immediate international communications, shopping at the finest stores in the middle of the night in your underroos and..... international fraud. Have you gotten your email asking you to hand over your bank account number to help someone in India get a few million dollars out of the country, of which you can keep part just for helping? Lots of people have received that and innumerable other imaginative and sometimes sane offerings, which are nothing more than tricks to get your money. Now, the United States and 28 other countries have joined together to create the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to fight cross-

border fraud.

The OECD has created guidelines to help governments work more effectively and efficiently to combat the increasing incidence of cross-border fraud. Last year, fraud complaints filed by U.S. consumers with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) against foreign countries rose 74 percent. Foreign cash offers, advance-fee loans and sweepstakes led the list. The FTC represents the United States in the OECD.

Timothy J. Muris, chairman of the FTC, says greater cooperation and information sharing, increased enforcement cooperation and more bilateral agreements are all tools that the OECD and its member nations' agencies can use to combat cross-border fraud.

Retail Association of Nevada

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