

The background of the slide is a light gray gradient with several realistic water droplets of various sizes scattered across it. The droplets have highlights and shadows, giving them a three-dimensional appearance. Some are near the top, some near the bottom, and some are clustered together.

# **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

**ILLINOIS RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION**

This presentation is designed for improving customer service for potable water and wastewater providers.

Though we may be dealing with both drinking water and wastewater, we do prefer a bit more separation.



Today, I hope we can learn at least one thing that we can take back that will be useful.

However, there will always be some things that will just remain a mystery.



SO TODAY WE WANT TO REMOVE THE MYSTERY  
SURROUNDING **CUSTOMER SERVICE.**



THE PLAN TODAY IS TO LOOK AT THE BENEFITS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE:

☛ TO LEARN THE “WHAT”

☛ TO LEARN THE “WHY”

☛ TO LEARN THE “HOW”



# CUSTOMER SERVICE

**DON'T BE AFRAID!**

We're in the customer service business.  
Don't run away from it!



# CUSTOMER SERVICE – IS IT REALLY NECESSARY ?



Water is free ...

So - What exactly are we selling?

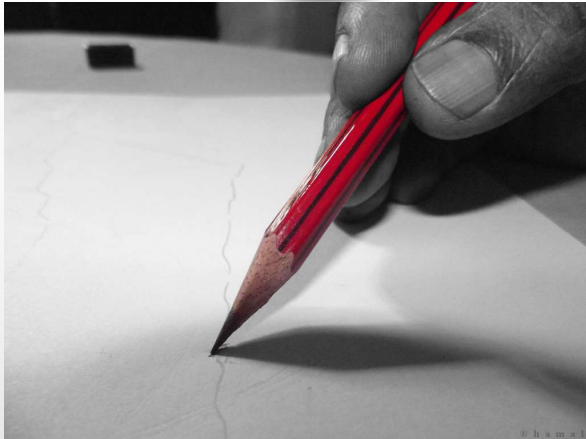
# LITTLE THINGS MATTER .....





So, could Customer Service be a little thing that makes a big difference?





Notes...

In today's world, some may ask "is customer service even important?"

As utilities, we do have a monopoly, so why break a sweat?

2 reasons: Moral value of providing service like we would like to have and return on investment



MAYBE WE NEED TO ASK OURSELVES, WHO DO  
WE WORK FOR?

.... REALLY?



Too often,  
many people  
have this  
attitude.

But we really  
work for the  
customers,  
right?

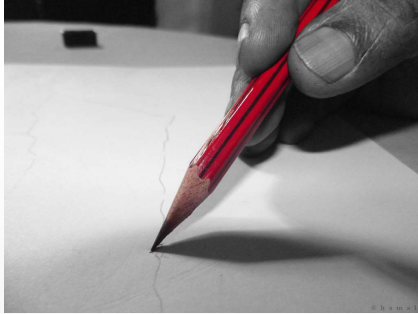


**So, is this the type service our customers pay for?**

**Is this the face they want to see?**

**This is the customer service that they remember and tell their friends.**

**And don't think for a minute that with social media, that story won't be all over town before you get back to the shop.**



Note ...

You and your system have a reputation.  
You are somebody in the community.  
It's up to you what type of somebody you are going to be.

Remember, you have an effect on people's quality of life,  
Sometimes we may be on their property. We may be  
tearing up their property.

They're going to remember you, alright.

So then, what is your Motivation?

“Whatever you do,  
always give 100%.  
Unless you're  
donating blood.”

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BILL MURRAY



Money??

Awards??



Fear??



Fame??



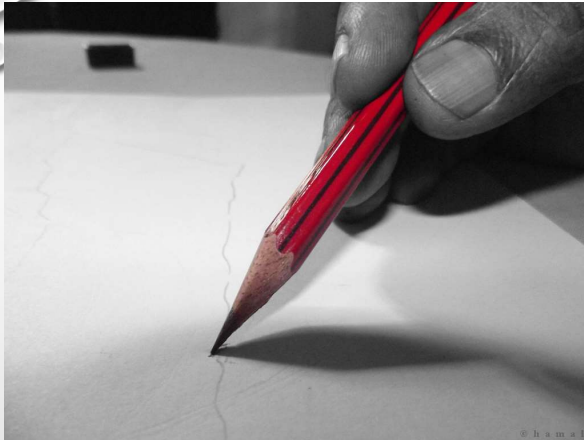


## CUSTOMER SERVICE – A MATTER OF ATTITUDE



- “PEOPLE DON'T CARE HOW MUCH YOU KNOW UNTIL THEY KNOW HOW MUCH YOU CARE”

— [THEODORE ROOSEVELT](#)



Note...

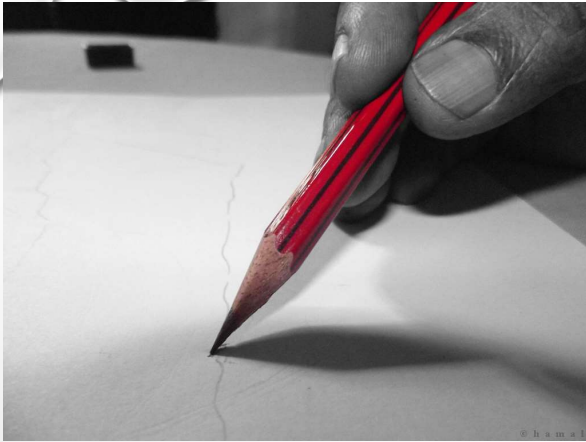
There's that moral directive to provide good customer service, because it's the right thing to do. It's what you would want, right?



# SERVICE



Whether you're in the water business or the wastewater business – It's really all we have to offer.



Notes...

But in order for Customer Service to succeed, there has to be a "buy-in" by all of those involved in your system.

This will translate to levels of service within the system. And that can make everyone more effective. Without everyone embracing the idea, the effectiveness of our customer service decreases exponentially.

AND THAT'S NOT ALWAYS  
EASY.

I'VE FOUND THAT MOST  
CUSTOMERS ARE NICE, PLEASANT  
PEOPLE. WELL-MANNERED AND  
APPRECIATIVE.

BUT THEN THERE ARE THE  
OTHERS.....



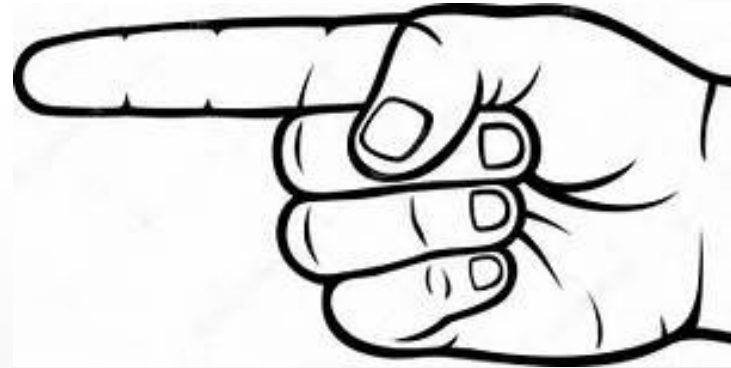


It's been my experience that about 97% of the customers are not a problem, but about 3% can just mess up your whole day!



That being said .....

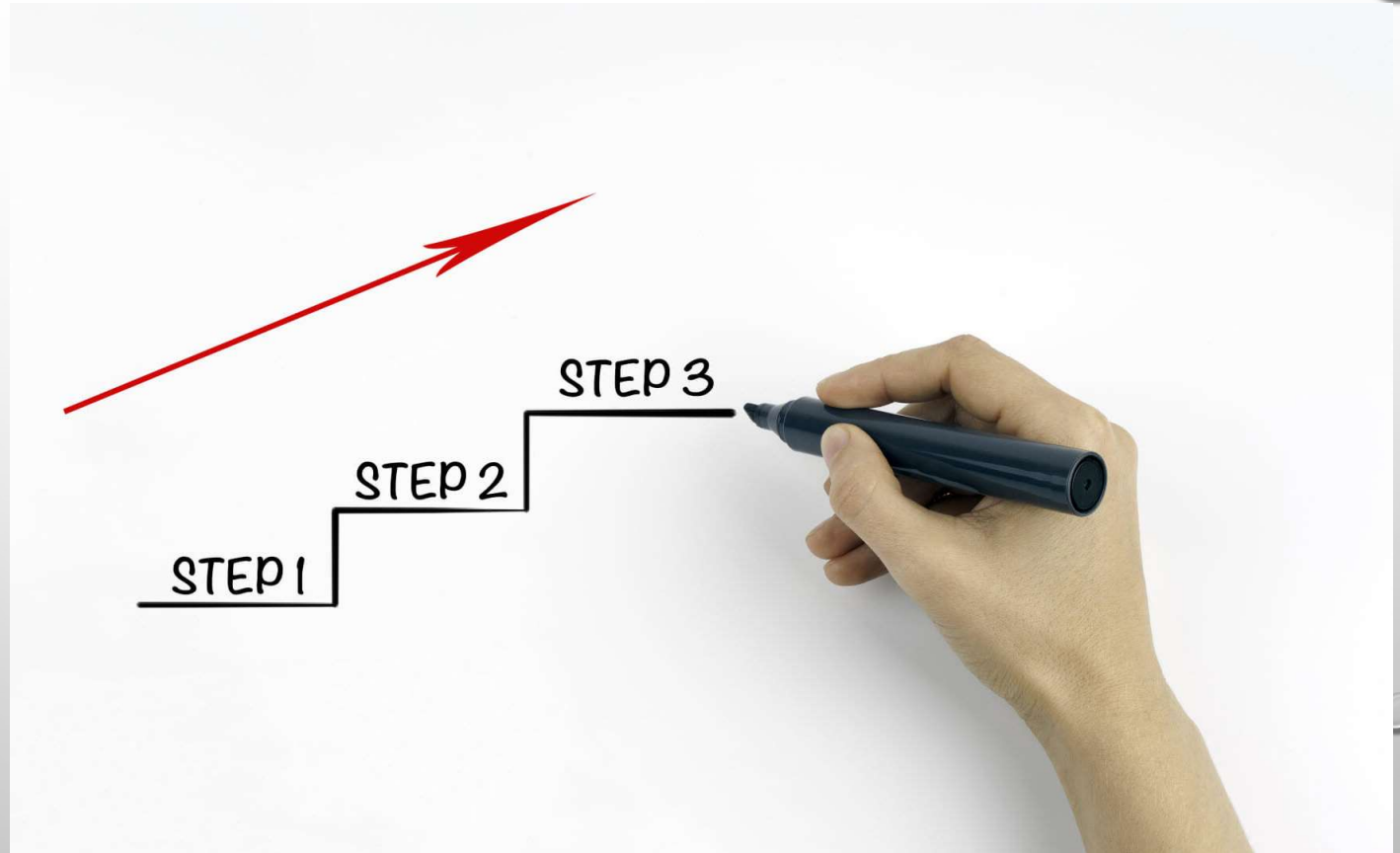




**The point is this - Customer Service is essential to make your system stand out from the others**



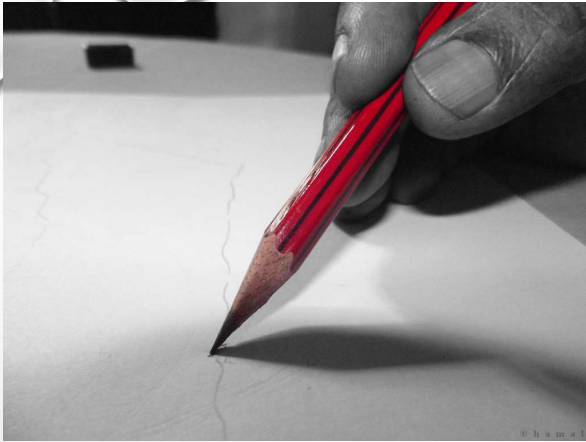
# 15 STEPS TO VALUABLE CUSTOMER SERVICE



# 1. SMILE

It puts the customer at ease.





Note ...

Studies have proven you can even tell someone is smiling over the phone.

Be aware of your body language. Your actions should match your words.

## 2. BE RESPECTFUL

Some people are hard to respect, but treat it as a challenge.

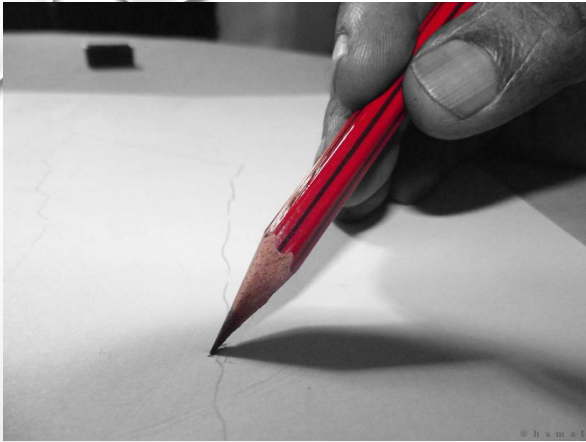
... It portrays you as  
A professional



### 3. RESPOND PROMPTLY AND ACCURATELY

Why the delay?





Note ...

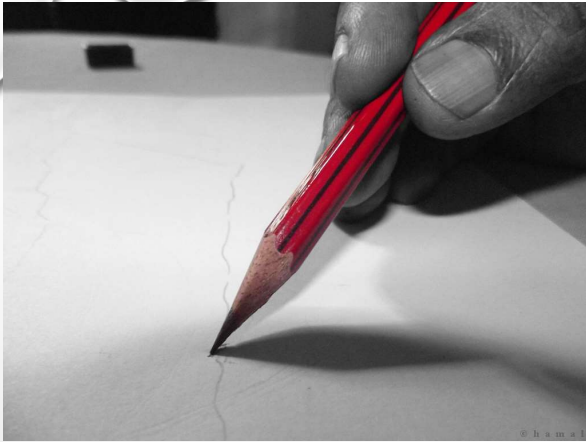
Nearly always, things get worse if you let them go.

Ignoring a problem is not a plan of action.

# CUSTOMER SERVICE – KEEP ON YOUR TOES!

“PEOPLE SAY NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE,  
BUT I DO NOTHING EVERY DAY.”  
— [A.A. MILNE](#), [WINNIE-THE-POOH](#)





Note ...

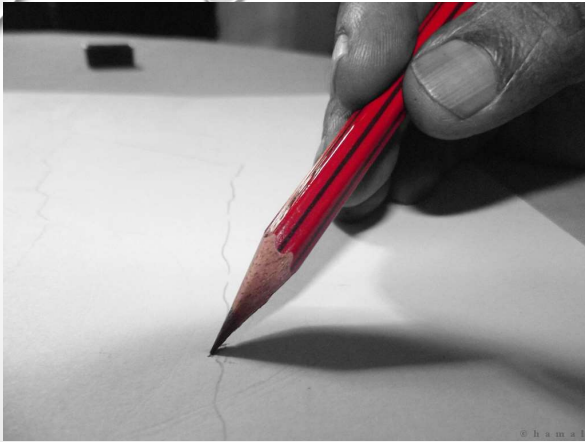
We shouldn't get tired or lax when it comes to customer service –

Act quickly, and you won't have to “re-act” later.



## 4. BE RELIABLE

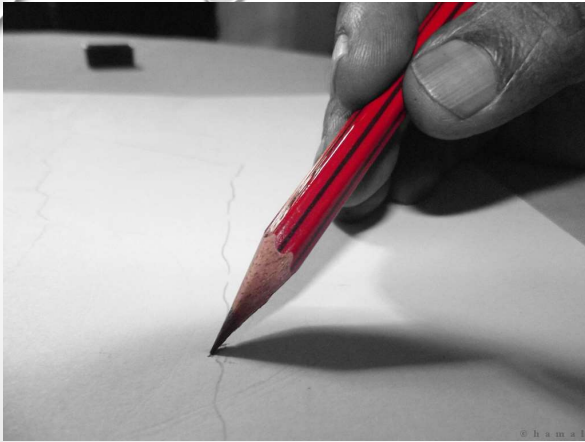




Note ...

Let the customer know you care and are interested, but most importantly, that you can be trusted

Because everything from here on breaks down at this point if the customer doesn't trust you.



Note ...

Only make commitments you can keep.

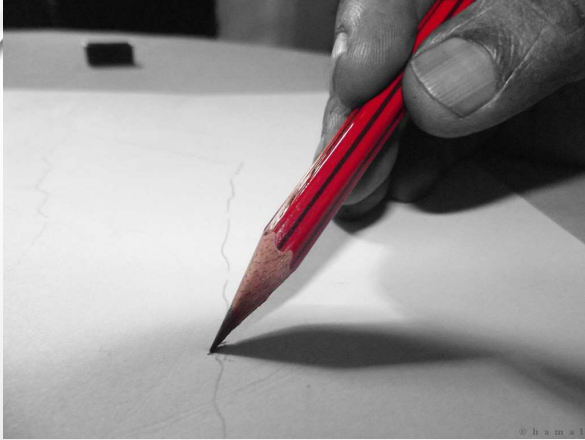
And only promise what you can and will do.

A good rule of thumb to keep in mind when it comes to customer service = "under-promise and over-deliver".

## 5. EXPLAIN THE PROCESS

They don't have to like what you say, but they shouldn't be able to complain about how you said it.





Note ...

Education encourages understanding

Make information available

Be clear and complete. Communicate the details.

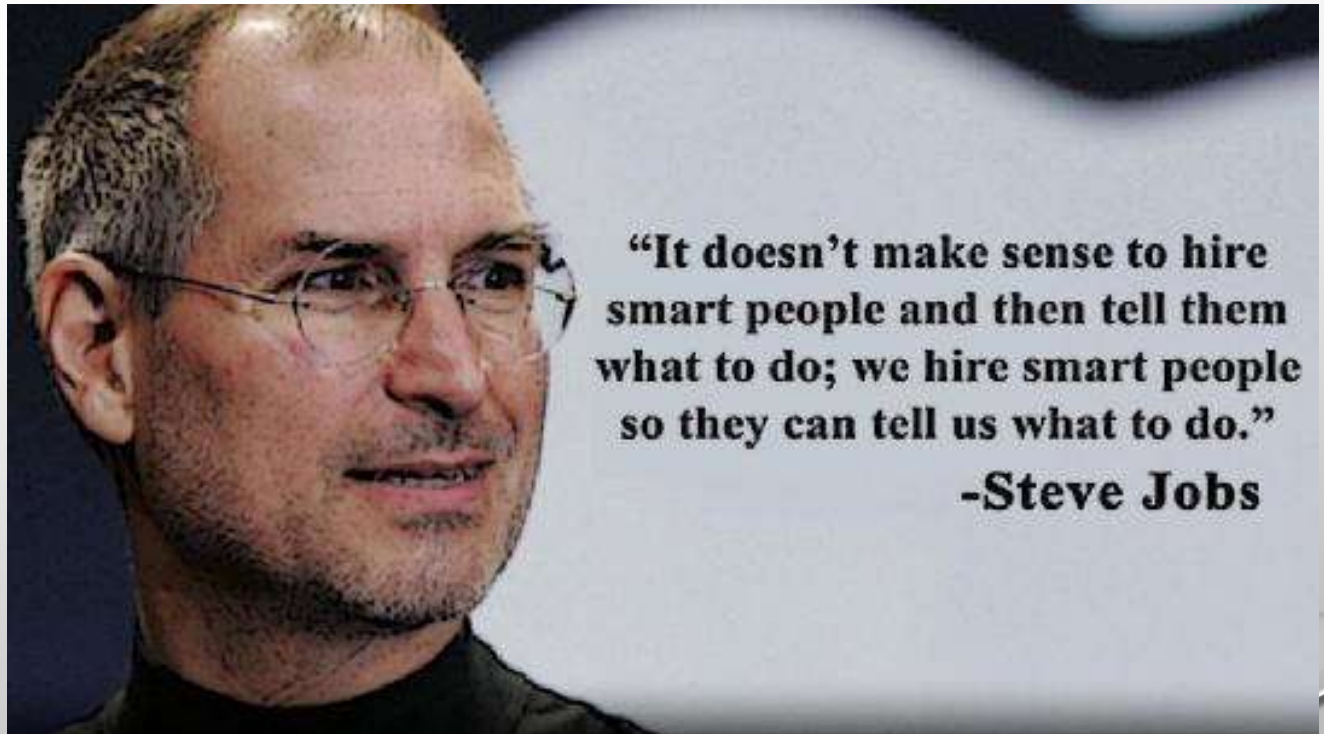
(example)

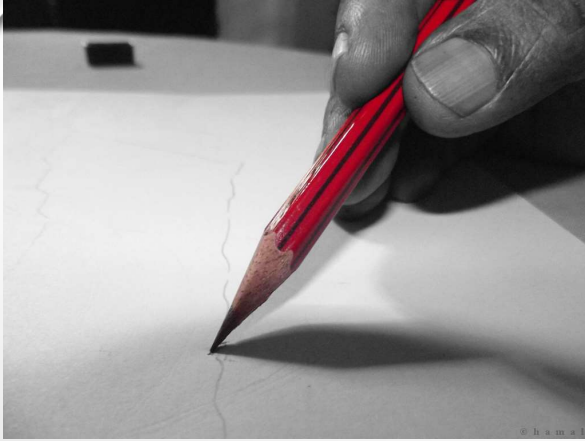
## 6. BE THE EXPERT

Know your job,

Have confidence,

Be definite





Note ...

Nobody should ever doubt you know what you're talking about.

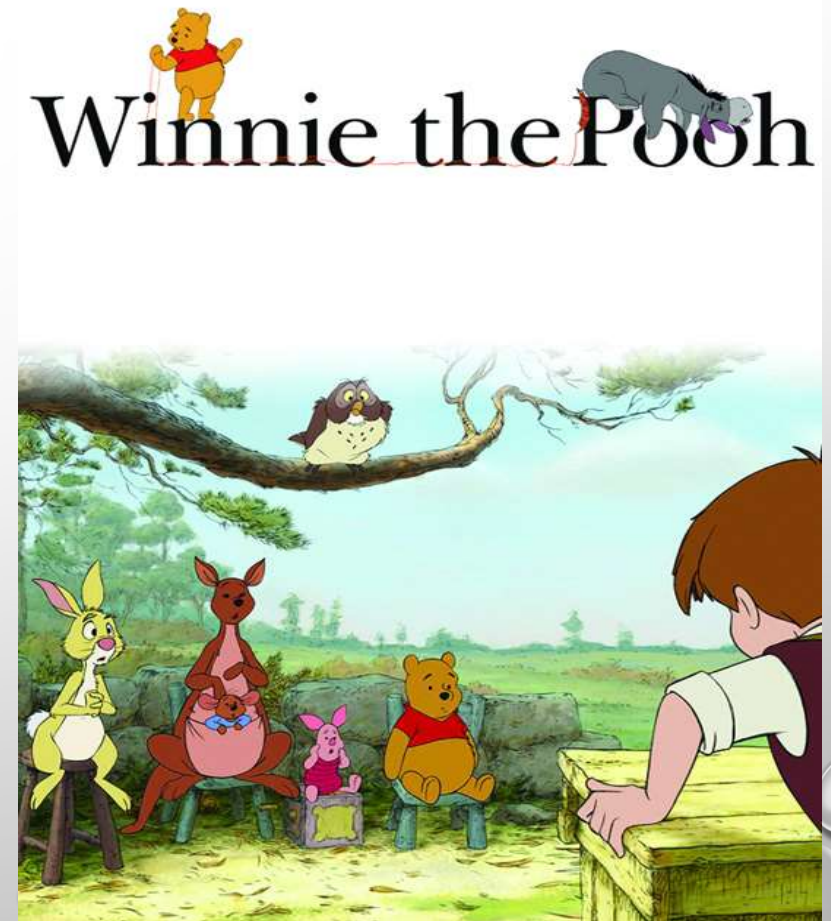
But you should be careful not to exceed your knowledge level.

Know when to "pass it off".

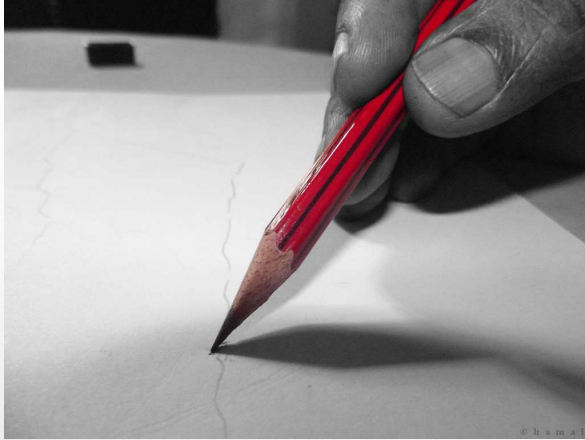
## CUSTOMER SERVICE – MAKE IT SIMPLE

- “IT IS MORE FUN TO TALK WITH SOMEONE WHO DOESN’T USE LONG, DIFFICULT WORDS BUT RATHER SHORT, EASY WORDS LIKE “WHAT ABOUT LUNCH?”

— [A.A. MILNE](#), [WINNIE-THE-POOH](#)







Note ...

But, be careful of technical jargon.

You're an expert, you've had training, you've got a certificate, you've been doing this for 20 years... We get it- you're an expert.

But it won't impress the customer - and it certainly won't help the customer - if the customer can't understand you.

## 7. ANTICIPATE THE CUSTOMER'S NEEDS

...before things get  
out of control

**Put yourself in their place.  
You've been a  
customer before.  
Right?**



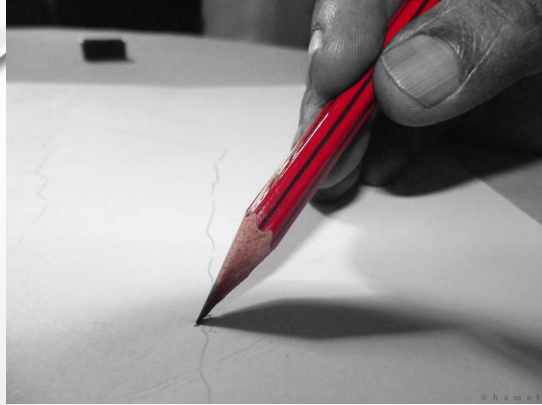
# A BIG PART OF CUSTOMER SERVICE – *LISTENING* (EVEN WHEN IT'S NOT EASY)



“THANK YOUR CUSTOMER FOR COMPLAINING AND MEAN  
IT.

MOST WILL NEVER BOTHER TO COMPLAIN. THEY'LL JUST  
WALK AWAY.”

— [MARILYN SUTTLE](#)



Note ...

Hydraulic, pressure, drainage and taste and odor issues can all

indicate a more serious problem.

And they can be useful tools in finding leaks, stagnant flow patterns, blockages - a whole myriad of problems.

Hearing what your customer has to say can be invaluable in saving water loss and property damage costs.

## 8. LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO SAY YES

There are  
always options.

Strive to put a  
positive spin on  
things.



## 9. ESTABLISH RAPPORT WITH THE CUSTOMER

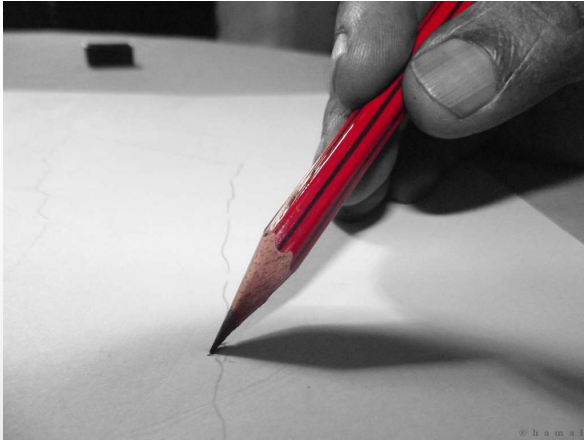
Relationships matter.

You're going to see them again,  
So make it a good experience.



## 10. RECOMMEND ACTIONS





Note ...

Seriously,  
Give some positive options,  
Be helpful



## 11. REACH AGREEMENT IF POSSIBLE

Try to find a  
common ground.

Or at least end on  
a positive.



CUSTOMER  
FEEDBACK  
SUPPORT  
iNNOVATIVE  
QUALITY  
EXCELLENT  
FRIENDLY

## 12. DETERMINE THE NEXT STEP

The A-Z of Customer Service

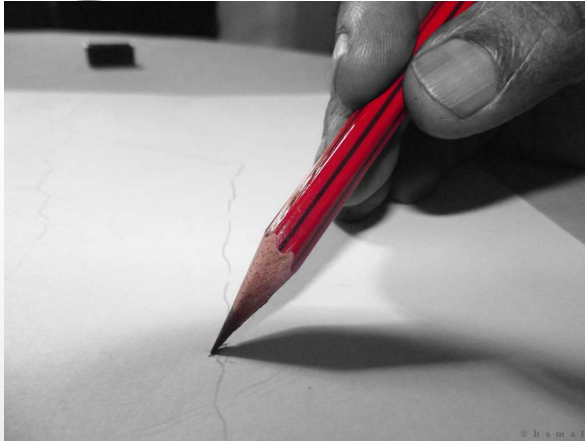
|                                  |                                |                               |                                |                                |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>A</b> is for<br>after-service | <b>B</b> is for<br>business    | <b>C</b> is for<br>customer   | <b>D</b> is for<br>dialogue    | <b>E</b> is for<br>euphemisms  |
| <b>F</b> is for<br>flexibility   | <b>G</b> is for<br>gratitude   | <b>H</b> is for<br>hotline    | <b>I</b> is for<br>intra day   | <b>J</b> is for<br>jargon-free |
| <b>K</b> is for<br>know-how      | <b>L</b> is for<br>loyalty     | <b>M</b> is for<br>marketing  | <b>N</b> is for<br>needs       | <b>O</b> is for<br>options     |
| <b>P</b> is for<br>pacing        | <b>Q</b> is for<br>quality     | <b>R</b> is for<br>resolution | <b>S</b> is for<br>Soft skills | <b>T</b> is for<br>trust       |
| <b>U</b> is for<br>user-friendly | <b>V</b> is for<br>verbal nods | <b>W</b> is for<br>wrap time  | <b>Y</b> is for<br>yes         | <b>Z</b> is for<br>zealous     |

Come up with a plan  
for you and the customer

## 13. FOLLOW-UP

Check back in...





Note ...

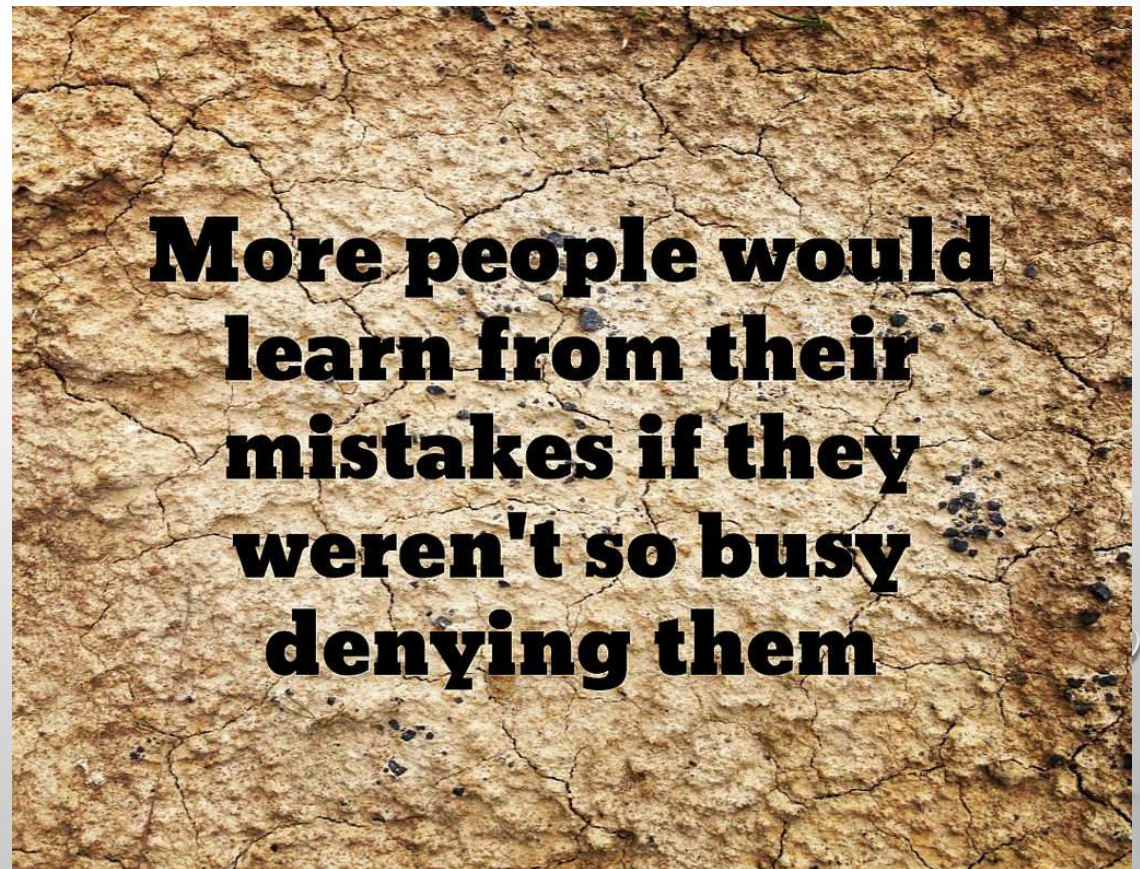
If the situation warrants it – check back in!

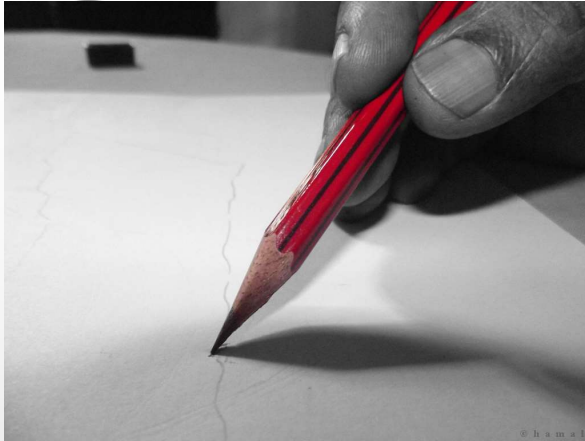
“Following up” says I care.

Don't allow everything you accomplished to go down the drain because you didn't follow-up.

## 14. BE RESPONSIBLE

Take responsibility  
Own up to your  
mistakes





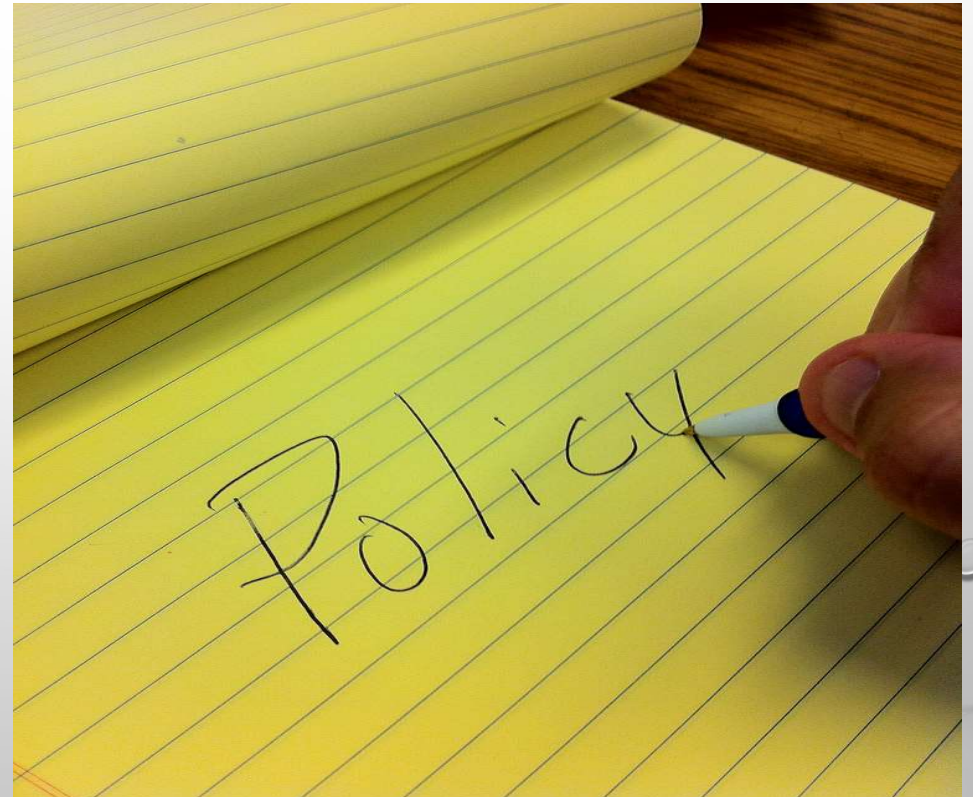
Note ...

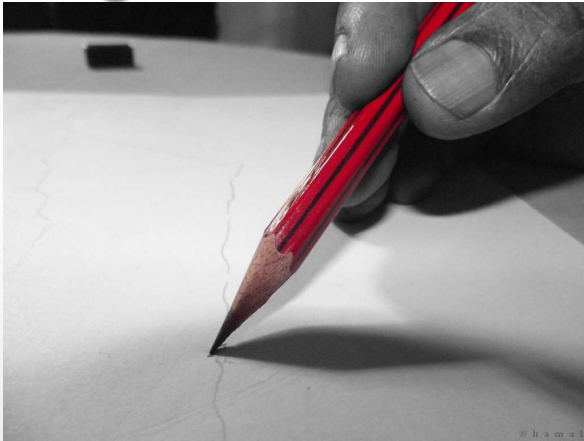
Sometimes you have to do the hard thing -  
the right thing

## 15. MAKE POLICIES THAT REQUIRE GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE

Develop a corporate culture of customer service

(A culture like this supports good customer service ideas)





Note ...

Having an awareness of intentional customer service, you can set benchmarks that can allow you to track managerial effectiveness, as well as operational efficiency.

Part of this comes from understanding the value of self-assessment.



# CUSTOMER SERVICE SPECTRUM

Where do you want to land on this line?

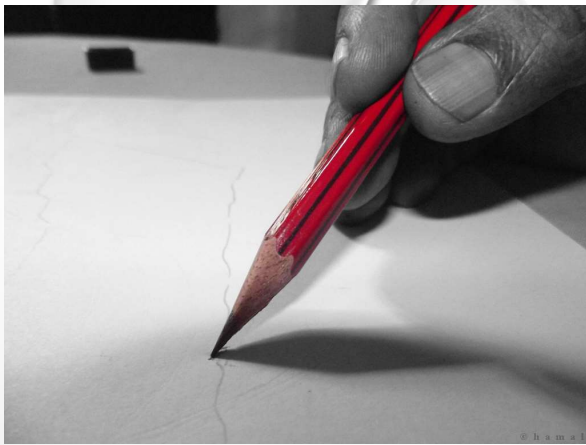


**BAD SERVICE**

**GOOD SERVICE**

**EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE**

(Satisfaction versus loyalty)



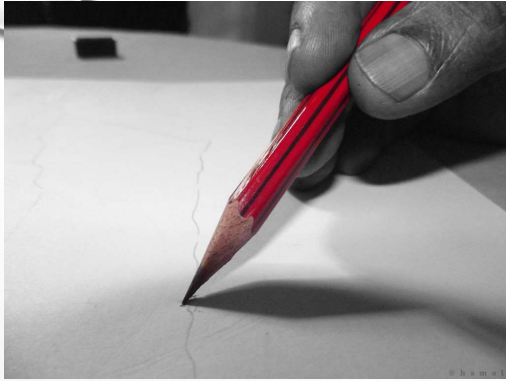
Note ...

Exemplary service reduces the issue of price.  
It can overshadow many things.

But how do you know what that one thing is  
that pushes your customer service to the far  
right on the customer service spectrum?

LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE  
A “MAGIC MOMENT”





Note ...

If you remember the movie *City Slickers*, then you remember Curly and the "one thing"

The same thing is true of customer service

No two situations will be exactly the same

No two customers will be exactly the same

But there's always an opportunity to turn good service into exceptional service



## SUMMARY:

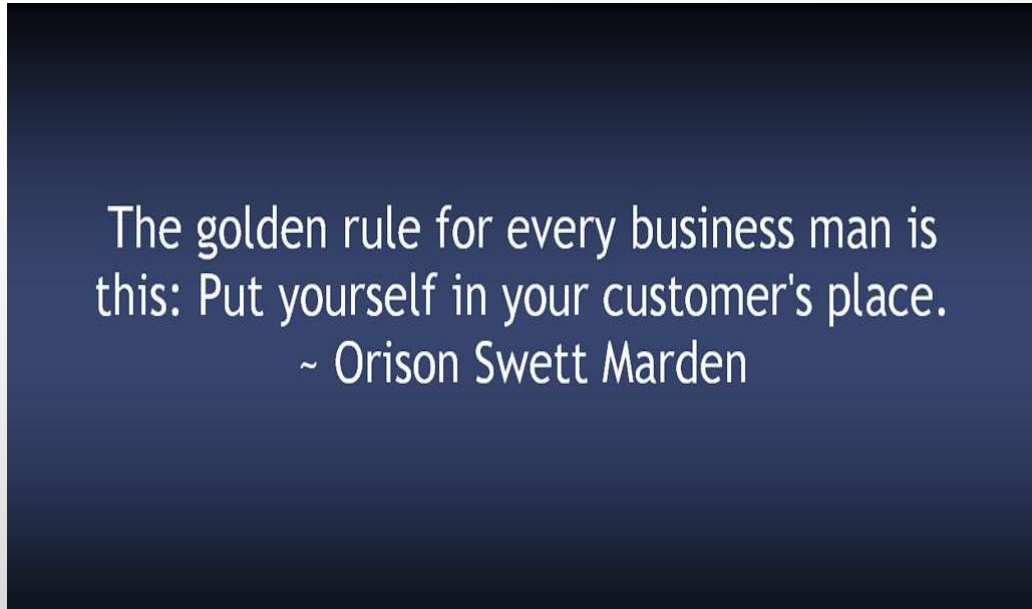
Provide value in service –

Exceed the customer's expectations


Or educate the customer to revise their expectations

Surprise them – provide service that is better than OK

Manage their emotions



The golden rule for every business man is this: Put yourself in your customer's place.  
~ Orison Swett Marden



## THE BOTTOM LINE

Better customer service



improved customer relations



your job just got easier

**It's a win-win !**

THANK YOU

