

Good Service Image Or Bankruptcy Tomorrow

High School
"Athlete
of the
Week"



Each Week In
The Post



ers offer an important lesson for retail businesses that wish to maximize their earnings. A business must decide whether it is going to be perceived as offering high quality service or high quality merchandise or both. I believe that companies electing to solely exploit low price as a substitute for good service and-or merchandise are merely painting a long-term mediocre earnings scenario. If America is moving towards a service dominated society, does this portend bankruptcy for those businesses that are not perceived to be underpinned with a philosophy of good service?

As a part of a marketing survey for a Delaware newspaper, I was queried by a marketing research firm to give my opinion on buying goods from several stores in northern New Castle County, Del. The interviewer called to my attention the fact that I seem to be very favorably disposed to Sears Roebuck products. This person's comments stirred my curiosity to understand this enchantment with Sears products.

In retrospect, I have purchased many Sears products, mostly hard goods (appliances, tools, telephones, and so on). In purchasing hard goods, I like to feel confident that their quality is good and that I will not have to undergo the "Third Degree" on adjustments for defective merchandise.

My high regard for Sears' good service and high quality merchandise became vividly clear when I visited another local retail chain store that offers minimal service. When I entered this store I was greeted by an electronic screening system and a guard. A quick scan along the aisles revealed that sales people were

pretty scarce. I am still seething from trying to get past this store's checkout counter.

I spent about 15 minutes trying to pay for two boxes of envelopes because an untrained cashier could not give a senior citizen couple their special discount. I finally gave up on this cashier and moved to another line only to have this cashier's supervisor attempt to pull her to bail out the old one. I was fuming because I could not believe that they would put an unassisted, untrained person on a checkout line. I finally exclaimed, "No!" I further demanded that the supervisor get someone else because of the very long line everyone had already spent trying to get

through the checkout. He acquiesced.

My dander was just starting to ease when the main door electronic alarm went off on the group in front of me. The guard rushed toward them like a wild beast that had stalked his prey. This trying experience thoroughly convinced me that purchasing hard good products from this store would be wrought with many hassles if these goods performed unsatisfactorily. I found that I had to toil to keep my ill-natured perception of the store's performance from affecting my view of the quality of their name brand merchandise.

I was troubled by my harsh assessment of this store until I examined its performance from a marketing researcher's perspective. My two favorite pastimes are studying marketing research and business strategy. In this backdrop, I feel very strongly that my initial perception was correct. My feelings are supported by the works of David Mazursky and Jacob Jacoby. They report in their article, "Forming Impressions of Merchandise and Service Quality," that people do have some definite items

they use to evaluate the quality of service. Mazursky and Jacoby write, "...the four most heavily accessed properties when forming service-quality impression were 'number of salespersons per department,' 'number of cashiers per department,' 'merchandise-return policy,' and 'number of fitting rooms.'"

Most people desire good quality merchandise along with good service. Mazursky and Jacoby further reported that there are some items that help to form a perception of quality merchandise in peoples' minds. They continued, "...the properties that were most heavily accessed when evaluating quality of merchandise were 'brand names,' 'pictures of stores,' 'interior design,' 'merchandise material,' and 'price ranges.'"

I feel these two research-

Staff Of Life Airs May 17

The real-life romantic developments and disasters of the staff members at "Life," a popular soap opera, match the tangled lives of their TV characters, in "Staff of Life," an "ABC Comedy Special" airing Friday, May 17, at 9:30 p.m. on WSOC-TV, Channel 9.

The staff members of a hit soap opera show get ready to leave town for a holiday weekend when Barry Cooper, the head

writer, suddenly has an emergency script rewrite to deliver. He adroitly lets the other go, and persuades Joanna, his co-writer and ex-wife of five months, to work late with him on revisions, thereby delaying her skiing trip with her new romantic interest.

Starring are Granville Van Dusen as Berry Cooper, Anne Twomey as Joanna.

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