

I have a couple customer service sayings I tend to over use. I don't usually speak them out loud. I usually say them to myself as a reminder to always put our customers, in any business first. "Treat your customers like they own you. Because they do." "You have to re-earn your customers business every day" and one that came from YAHOO, which I thought was brilliant. When asked what Yahoo stood for, some folks there responded "You Always Have Other Options".

I personally think that the only way you can connect to your customers, is to put yourself in their shoes. For me personally, if I can't be a customer of my own product, then I probably am not to do a good job running the company. When I go to a Landmark Theater, I don't call ahead and tell them I'm coming and ask for special treatment. I stand in line and pay for my ticket like everyone else. I get my popcorn and Diet Coke like everyone else. I get my seat like everyone else.

With the Mavs, I sit in a seat that is for sale to the general public, it's a great seat next to the bench, but I also make sure that I sit in the very top row behind the baskets, our \$2 dollar/10 dollar seats during the season as well. Same routine. I'm not surrounded by security. I don't get special anything. If the Nachos are slow and the beer is warm, I know it and the people sitting around me also let me know.

It's interesting to watch different CEOs of different companies and how they deal with the issue of making customers happy. You can tell the ones that don't trust their products or services. They travel with big groups of people. There are advance teams to make sure everything is perfect. They bring security to places where their customers are families and kids. They protect themselves from any possible interactions, whether direct, phone or email by having secretaries filter everything, and they respond with form letters or assistants, if at all.

I don't know how they do it. I make my email available to everyone and anyone. Not only that, and more importantly, I make sure that all the customer service emails get forwarded to me. If someone is complaining, I want to know what about, and I want to get it fixed quickly. The best focus groups are your customers telling you what they think. No company is perfect, but the CEO who doesn't listen to direct feedback from customers will not take the company as far as it can go.

But it gets worse from there for CEOs that don't communicate with their customers. There used to be a saying that happy customers might tell one person, but unhappy customers tell 20. In the internet age, one happy customer might make a note in their blog or forward an email. An unhappy customer, starts a blog, writes about how unhappy they are, takes out an ad on search engines to let people who are looking for the product know how mad they are, starts an email forwarding chain asking people to boycott the product, does a Youtube video about it and games Youtube to make it one of the top 10 most viewed videos.... You get the picture.

IN this day and age, it's a lot easier to proactively communicate than to react.