



We exist to serve others so they may better serve the world.®

Written by: Bryan K. Williams, D.M.

March 11, 2011

Customer Problem Resolution: The 100% Principle

When it comes to serving others, chances are that you will make mistakes occasionally. Even in the most opulent, 5-star hotels and restaurants, guests are sometimes disappointed. The same goes for hospitals, banks, nursing homes, spas, airlines, and any other businesses that serve people. The key to this seemingly unavoidable dilemma of making mistakes is how well you exemplify the “100% principle”. The *100% principle* is simply this: Whenever you receive a complaint or request, follow it through until you are 100% sure that the customer is happy with the resolution. It does not get much simpler than that.

...follow it through until you are 100% sure that the customer is happy with the resolution.

We recently had a new website built and the web designer offered a training session on how my team could update the site’s content on our own. During the training, I asked about two features of the web software, and Kaci, who was the trainer, did not know the answer (she was obviously embarrassed about not knowing). She then promised that she would find out and then follow up with me. Now, over the years I have unfortunately developed a sense of skepticism whenever someone promises to follow up, because they usually don’t do so. In fact, I am usually the one who has to follow up with the company who said they would follow up with me! Backwards...isn’t it? At any rate, Kaci sent an email to me that same evening explaining that she emailed the appropriate people and they would know the answers to my questions. **[Note: You don’t have to wait until the final resolution to communicate with the customer. Keep the customer updated on what you are currently doing to help.]**

The next day, Kaci sent me an email with the answers to my questions and followed up by asking if there was anything else I needed. She then proactively called me a few days later to inquire if we had any additional questions that she could assist us with. Ladies and gentlemen, THAT was the *100% principle* in action.

At a recent hotel stay, I noticed that I had forgotten my toothpaste and toothbrush at home, so I called the operator to request a complimentary set of those toiletries to be sent to my room. The operator said she would have it sent up within 10 minutes. 30 minutes went by, and still no toiletries. I then called back the operator to see what was going on. **[Note: Your customers should NEVER have to follow up with you first. You should proactively give updates.]** She said, “I thought THEY sent it up already.” I immediately thought, “who exactly is they?”. She then promised me that the toiletries would be in my room shortly. Still, I received nothing 15 minutes afterwards. I then stepped into the hallway, saw a housekeeper, and politely requested toiletries from her cart, which she

happily gave to me. 30 minutes after receiving the toiletries from the housekeeper, I finally received the toiletries that were promised to me over 1 hour prior from the operator. That is NOT the *100% principle* in action.

Your customers should NEVER have to follow up with you first.

The operator could have given me a time quote, then followed up with the appropriate department to ensure that the items got delivered. She would then follow-up with me to either update me on the status or confirm that I received the toiletries. The most important element of the *100% principle* is to take personal ownership of a request or complaint. Those who work like they work own it, will follow through to the end.

Here is a simple follow-up log that you can use with your team. Please benchmark it, and refine as you see fit.

| Date | Time | Request or Complaint | Forwarded to (if applicable) <i>[Dept or Person]</i> | Follow-up with appropriate dept or person (if applicable) <i>[Date & Time]</i> | Follow-up with customer <i>[Date & Time]</i> | 100% happy customer? <i>[Yes or No]</i> |
|------|------|----------------------|---|---|---|--|
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |

There are countless examples of people not following through. If you say that you will do something, then do it! Or at least make sure it gets done. Follow-up with whomever you need to, but your ultimate goal is to ensure that your customers are 100% happy with the resolution. Follow-up, follow-up, and follow-up some more. Your customers deserve it.

Supplemental section:

Whenever you receive a complaint or a request, here is a recommended sequence to follow:

1. Say you will own the complaint / request.
2. Get the customer's contact information (email and phone # should suffice).
3. Get the customer's preferred mode of contact (email, text, phone call).
4. Begin the process of fixing the issue. Ensure that the resolution matches the complaint / request.
5. If you need to pass the issue to another person / department to handle, then do so. (But remember, that YOU still own it!).
6. Proactively inform the customer on the status every 24 hours using the customer's preferred mode of contact.
7. When you've received confirmation that the issue has been resolved, then contact the customer to inform them.
8. Follow-up to ensure that the customer is, in fact, happy with the resolution.

Recommended tools for upcoming and veteran “follow-up” pros:

- Follow-up log
- Schedule reminders in your own calendar (use a program like Microsoft Outlook or any other calendar tool)
- A personal attitude of ownership and commitment to follow-through.

Order Bryan’s new book and other resources at: <http://www.bwenterprise.net>

Engaging Service: 22 Ways to Become a Service Superstar

Find more resources relating to service excellence at
www.bwenterprise.net.

Also on the website, you can subscribe to the official
B.Williams Enterprise emailing list. You will receive
announcements, newsletters and other excellent resources.

-We exist to serve others so they may better serve the world®.-

