

CUSTOMER-FOCUS: Service from the Heart!

By David H. McNair

When the time is right.

It was the week of September 10th. I had on my calendar to write that month's article on Customer-Focus. Suffice to say – the article never happened.

Like many of us, I was one of the stranded. I was out of town with a flight scheduled for 4pm the afternoon of the 11th. While I had an overwhelming desire to be back home with my family, the inconvenience of being stranded out of town was inconsequential. Our nation was (is) under attack.

For two weeks, I struggled with the idea of writing this column. How could I trivialize our newspaper's content with an article on Customer-Focus? After all, weren't we all reading the paper to learn about the latest investigative discoveries, to learn about the recovery progress in New York and Washington, and to learn about our economic defibrillation?

And then it hit me. As I watched the news one evening and observed the incredible and selfless service of the recovery workers – I knew that the time was right. Maybe more right than ever before. You see, as a country, we are living *service*. We have people across our country making anonymous blood donations in record numbers. We have businesses, schools, churches, synagogues, and civic clubs focusing their resources to give in ways that were unimaginable just days earlier. We watched our music, entertainment and media industries come together in an unprecedented event that raised more than \$150 million dollars for recovery efforts in a several-hour telethon. The list of service acts grows exponentially everyday – and blessedly so!

Point here is...*service* has always been about helping people. It's about acts of compassion and commitment. It's about reaching out. It's about our most basic core values – some might say it's the purest expression of human dignity and respect. What true service is not – it's not about the almighty dollar, and it's not about competitive advantage. Even within the context of our business worlds, if it's born from that – it's shallow and short-term.

Today's perspective

Today I sit in yet another airport. I (without complaint mind you) spent an additional hour shuffling through our new and improved security checkpoints. How striking that the flight at the gate next to me had only one passenger. It's a different world for sure.

Yet as we all struggle through these times, one cannot help but notice the resurgence of prayer and patriotism that has occurred. Just look at the faces of strangers around you, and you will see more gentle smiles and nods of acknowledgment. People seem to be

going out of their way to try and make each day just a little better for one another. And it's all from the heart. It seems that we have found not only a unity of purpose, but a unity of being.

When we talk to those of a generation past, they describe these caring acts as a way of life. People took a little more pride in their work... a little more pride in their county. They speak of a little more devotion to God, and a little more devotion to each other. Maybe it's because they had been through more adversity. Maybe not. Maybe it was just the right way to be. In any event, a certain something is back. We can only hope and pray that it's here to stay.

That little unexpected something...

A tradition I'd like to continue is to end each article by recognizing someone in our community who has displayed exceptional (on-the-job) customer service.

Krispy Kreme – Have you been to their new store in West Ashley? It's worth the trip. On an impulse, I drove 20 minutes to gorge on one (okay, four!) of those hot, melt-in-your-mouth doughnuts. How disappointed I was to see that the neon "hot now" sign was not on. No problem -- I'm not beyond begging. As I pulled to the drive in window, I pleaded... "are you sure you don't have any hot ones ready? I drove a long way for these." And with the most empathetic eyes, she asked me if I could wait. In short, she filled my standard order of two mixed dozen doughnuts, and topped it off with a couple of the freshest doughnuts just off the line. When I offered to pay for them – she said, "oh no, anyone who wants them that badly deserves them." Guess what -- I'll be back!