

Coaches Corner™
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1) Words from the President – Dirk Zeller

The key to improving your customer service is to clearly understand what customer service is to the customer you are working with right now.

Everyone has a very different view of what constitutes customer service. Some people are far more demanding in what they want from people they do business with than they are with others in non-business relationships.

Joseph Mancuso wrote in his great book, Winning With The Power Of Persuasion, "The most powerful three letter word is 'ask'." He further said that most children ask about sixty questions a day. After they graduate from college, they're asking two questions a day and one of them is, "When do we eat?" The question is what happened between the ages of 3 and 23? How do we change back?

The most successful people ask a lot of questions. They are well prepared to ask the questions that make the greatest difference. Don't assume that you know the answers before you ask the questions. We need to know the standard of service our prospects and clients want from us. We need to know how our prospects and clients want to be communicated with and what they expect. The questions are the key in this process. Let me give you some great questions to ask:

1. What would have to happen for me to be the best Agent you ever worked with?

2. What is your expectation of me as your Agent?
3. What are the most important criteria when selecting an Agent?
4. How are you going to judge success when working with me?

These questions are powerful and will set you apart from all other Agents that a potential client might interview. They will also give you a very strategic standard of service you will need to follow if you want to create a “raving fan” through this transaction.

Lastly, take stock of yourself. Do a clear self-evaluation of the service that you are providing. Ask yourself this all-important question, “What is the one thing we could start doing or stop doing that would dramatically impact our customer relationships?”

It is essential for you to spend time evaluating this question. If you have other team members, ask them. Ask your closing coordinator. Ask your listing coordinator. You might even ask other Agents in your office to create some new insight for you.

Take the time to understand each client’s definition of customer service. Don’t miss the opportunity to create a “raving fan” every time.

Remember that the questions are always more important than the answers.

To Your Success,

Dirk Zeller
CEO
Real Estate Champions

2) Achieving Relationship Excellence

As a real estate Agent, your success depends on the quality and durability of the relationships you build with your clients, and the one and only way to build solid, enduring relationships is to deliver excellent, unrivaled service. To be an outstanding Agent you need to lavish your clients with service that exceeds their expectations – from the get-go and throughout a long business relationship.

The challenge is that not all clients expect or want the same kind of service. What constitutes excellent service to one client might seem inadequate or even like overkill to another.

It seems hard to imagine, but an Agent could sell a client's home in less than a week, at full price, and still have a dissatisfied customer. This could be due to some action or oversight during the negotiation, inspection, or closing process that simply didn't match with the client's service expectations.

To avoid service mismatches, learn each person's service expectations by doing something that few Agents take time to do: Ask. Then put your findings to work by following these steps:

- **Learn each person's service expectations.** Before you enter a new prospect presentation, make it a rule to learn everything you can about what your prospects are looking for in an Agent and how they define their excellent service.
- **Customize and personalize your service delivery.** In your initial presentation and in subsequent contacts – whether you're working to make the sale, service the client, build an after-the-sale relationship, or request a referral – refer to your initial research and highlight the service aspects that each client finds important. Weave in the words you heard them use to define great service. Highlight the communication points they described as essential service attributes. Let them know that you understand their needs and are focused on exceeding their expectations.
- **Never get complacent.** Don't assume that, if your service falls a bit short, your best clients will simply turn a blind eye. And, by all means, don't think that if your clients want more or better service they will say something to you. They won't, because they don't want the confrontation. They'd rather just go away quietly and never come back.

I've met Agents who are successful in spite of their "my way or the highway" approach to service delivery. Rather than focusing on customized service and long-term relationships, these agents prefer to serve a stream of here-today-gone-tomorrow clients that they acquire through relentless prospecting and high-volume lead development. These agents have a take-it-or-leave-it attitude about service. They practice what I call a fast-food hamburger joint philosophy: "We sell hamburgers and fries, and if you don't like hamburgers and fries, pick another restaurant." The difference, of course, is that the number of people who want hamburgers and fries is huge, and, if the fare is good, most customers automatically come back for more. The same is hardly true when it comes to homebuyers and sellers.

As an Agent, your prospect universe is limited, and your customers aren't apt to become repeat customers unless they are treated with the kind of unparalleled, consistent, and customized service that turns them into clients for life.

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