

Exceeding expectations fuels success

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I recently heard an unusual customer service story. Realizing she couldn't find her expensive digital camera, my friend Judith began to retrace her steps. She took her car in for service, she thought she left the camera in the car and

although not completely sure, she decided to call the dealer and inquire. Not hoping for much she told the service manager her story and asked him to follow up. Two days later J.R. Solis, Service Manager for Infinity of Tucson telephoned her and said that he couldn't trace it down but if she would give him the model number, he would replace it. He exceeded his customer's expectations a few weeks later by replacing the camera.

Many times when consumers think they are definitely right expectations are not met – Judith said, “I was expecting to be asked to prove I had left the camera in the car and I wasn't totally sure – I was shocked. I was treated more fairly than I thought I would be. They created an even more loyal customer!” Although Infinity is small compared to dealerships like Chevrolet, their philosophy of service along with the introduction of new vehicle models has led to steadily increasing growth over the last fifteen years. Exceeding customer's expectations is the cornerstone of their philosophy. This approach keeps his service department in the top ten of the Customer Satisfaction Index. “We work on treating everybody as if they are welcome, putting them at ease as much as possible and when they have an issue, we hear from our customers – then we have an opportunity to exceed their expectations,” Solis said. The following best practices can be modified and used by any firm to improve performance, growth and profitability:

1. Treat everyone as an individual. Solis says, “We have rules and regulations which we can stretch and bend but of

course not break. For example, from time to time if a vehicle is just out of warranty and there has been no abuse by the customer, Infinity is extremely good at supporting the dealership. Depending on the situation we might pay ½, ¾ or even the entire repair.”

2. “We make it a practice to treat everybody the way we want to be treated. I use my own experience as a consumer as a guide. When I go out for lunch, I notice how well my expectations are met and relate it to how we meet our customers' expectations,” said Solis. One expectation Solis feels is important is communication – it is human nature to expect the worst so avoid putting anxiety on your customer - never leave a customer guessing.
3. Develop and train a self-directed team. “Everybody from the cashier, the wash bay (Infinity washes each car they service), to the repair team needs to understand their role and responsibilities”, said Solis. “We work with sales just like they are a customer to support their efforts. We are a self directed team with everybody doing their part to create success.”

The evidence that they are succeeding is the fact that people in service and sales communicate well and work closely as a team to serve clients and that 65 to 70% of new car sales can be attributed to very satisfied service clients or referrals from those clients.

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