

CUSTOMER SERVICE TIPS

Using customer surveys

By E.T. Wandtke

■ Survey customers to find out how they perceive your service, and to get feedback and input on areas that may need improvement.

Many lawn care/landscape companies

conduct a regular customer survey, but they often forget to survey the employees to determine how they rate the quality of service.

Goals of a survey should be:

1. to determine from customers what service level is expected; and
2. to improve the employee's perception that they are professional service personnel.

Creating a survey form requires the insights of a professional who has developed similar surveys in the past. How questions are asked, the sequence of the questions, and the response method may all influence the reliability of your final results. Use a professional surveying firm to develop the questionnaire, and the validity of the results of your survey will be more beneficial.

It's important to take surveys in different months, to take out the predictability of the survey and to prevent your employees from performing special services only the month before the survey is distributed.

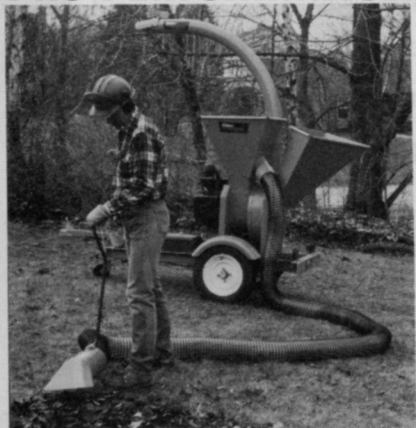
Many companies have found that sharing the results of a survey with their customers and employees is very beneficial. It is an opportunity to identify what has been improved since the previous survey. Specific issues which need to be improved can be defined and the type of corrective action identified. This is the time to demonstrate to both your customers and employees how committed you are to customer service.

Sam Walton achieved this recognition in the highly competitive low margin department store business (Wal-Mart). He believes customers need to perceive that you are providing better service than the competition, and he continues to push his employees to higher and higher customer service awareness.

Walton's goal is not to be perceived as an average department store but one that offers the best service.

If you do not have a customer survey program in place, start now. Improved customer service will follow.

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13-14: Southeastern Turfgrass Conference, Tifton, Ga. Contact: Dr. Glenn W. Burton, Coastal Plain Station, P.O. Box 748, Tifton, GA 31793; (912) 386-3353.

MAY

3-5: Menninger Sunbelt Conference, Orlando, Fla. Contact: Florida Nursery-men's & Growers Assn. (FNGA), 5401 Kirkman Rd., Suite 650, Orlando, FL 32819; (407) 345-8137.

6-9: National Club Assn. Leadership Conference, The Broadmoor, Colorado Springs, Colo. Contact: NCA, Washington Harbour, 3050 K St., NW, Washington, DC 20007; (202) 625-2080.

8-21: Target Specialty Products Field Days, Tempe, Ariz., Fresno, San Jose, Ventura, Los Angeles, Brea, Calif. Contact: Mick Danskin, Target Specialty Products, Marketing Communications, 17710 Studebaker Rd., Cerritos, CA 90701; (800) 352-3870.

13-15: Golf Course Asia, Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre, Bangkok, Thailand. Contact: Ellen MacGillavry, Expoconsult, P.O. Box 200, 3600AE, Maarsse, The Netherlands; phone: ++3465-737 77.

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