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CUSTOMER SERVICE TIPS

Good service results when teamwork's the top priority

by Ed Wandtke

■ This question is always being discussed in the lawn care industry, yet no one seems to be able to really answer the question. Owners, technicians, salesmen, customers—who is really to blame?

After years of discussing customer service with owners and service personnel in the industry, I believe I understand who is to blame. But first we must look at what is necessary for good service.

Good service is the result of three people coming together: the owner, the technician, and the salesperson. When these three can identify customer problems, perform the service, and provide follow-up, the customer is satisfied.

The owner must see to it that the employees are properly trained, the salesperson must correctly identify the customer's problems and expectations, and the technician must perform a thorough and quality job.

If you consider service to be a working triangle among the owner, technician and salesperson, you can visualize what is needed for good service. So who is to blame for bad service? The answer is this: your "triangle of good service" has become a "triangle of trouble."

The triangle of trouble is the result of poor communication: among employees, customer and company owner.

I have yet to hear of bad service when owners do the work themselves. The reason for this is because they have no one to communicate with but themselves. As a result, there are no communication blocks.

Three easy steps to good service:

1) Communicate with your employees what you believe good service to be. Make sure the salesperson and the technician completely understand what you mean.

2) Train your employees so good service is easy. Regular training sessions are the key to maintaining a consistency in the quality of your service.

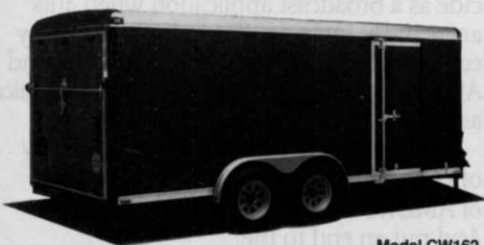
3) Follow up with the customer to make sure he or she is completely satisfied. This is a good way to see if your company is having any problems.

Work at these three easy steps and next time I see you at a conference or trade show, I hope you can tell me your company has a "triangle of good service."

—Ed Wandtke is a principle in Wandtke & Associates, 2586 Oakstone Dr., Columbus, OH 43231. For further information about the items covered in this article, phone (614) 891-3111.

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