



PETRA PROCESS

THE ONE CUSTOMER SERVICE MISTAKE
ALL BUSINESSES SHOULD AVOID



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LIFE LESSONS for BUSINESS OWNERS

As both an entrepreneur and business coach, I'm cursed with the proclivity to recognize areas for improvement in any businesses that I visit – even as just a customer. I wait in lines, stay on hold and watch mistakes happen, all the while dreaming of how I'd create a better customer service experience.

Case in point: I recently accompanied my girlfriend, Pam, on a trip to a car dealership – and what should have been a simple transaction turned into a nightmare, all because of customer experience.

Throughout the entire experience, I witnessed from the sidelines numerous small mistakes that, if resolved, could widely improve the processes of that car dealership and grow its business. But it wasn't these small mistakes that did the most damage. Because of just one critical error, they will never know what they did wrong.

With over 180,000 miles on her current car, Pam knew that the time had come to replace her trusty and reliable vehicle of many years. She liked her current car, so she decided to simply replace it with a new version of the same model and brand. The only change would be a new color. To make the transaction even easier, she sold her old car to a friend and she didn't need financing, opting to use her local bank for financing or pay cash.

Based on the above, I assumed that the car shopping experience would be extremely quick and painless. We contacted several dealers in the area and gave them the exact specifications of her new car and asked them to respond with their best price. Simple, right?

After receiving responses from three dealers in the area, Pam made the decision to go with the dealer closest to her house. They had the exact vehicle she wanted, although it was at another location, so it would take a few days to receive. And their price was almost identical to the lowest price received. They even said they would match a 0% interest financing offer that another dealer had offered to attract her business. Her next step was to head to the dealership and fill out the paperwork. We decided to do it on the way out of town for the weekend, because it was going to be so easy.

Upon arrival, she was told that she had to meet with the financing person and there was one customer in front of her. She was reassured, "It will be a short wait..." It turns out their definition of a "short" wait was several hours.

Multiple times, she asked what could be done to shorten the wait. Surprisingly, even if she decided to pay cash, their process required that she visit with the finance person. As she later found out, that was because the finance person's goal was to upgrade her on insurance, financing, warranties and other add-ons – despite the fact that she clearly told her salesperson upon arrival that she did not want any of those add-ons.

Her only request was a quick experience, which they failed to deliver.

Upon finishing her paperwork with the finance person, my girlfriend was approached one last time by the salesperson as she headed out the door. He said it was "really important" that he go over one last detail of the transaction in his office. He proceeded to review the survey that she would receive from the manufacturer about her car-buying experience. He handed her a pre-filled out version of the survey with certain areas highlighted with the exact score he wanted her to provide so he could get his "full commission."

He explained in great detail that his pay was directly related to the score on the survey. He even bribed her with some all-weather floor mats she noticed earlier in the day but decided were too expensive. He said the mats would "magically" be in her car when it was delivered – a small token of his appreciation for filling out the survey per his instructions.

All in all, the customer service experience was less than satisfactory and was riddled with mistakes. But, it was the salesperson's mistake that most seriously hurt the business. Can you spot it?

As I watched the conversation about the floor mats unfold, that desire to help businesses improve struck me, and I realized that the incentive structure put in place by the dealership was going to prevent them from getting the real information – the true survey results – they needed to improve their business. (Which is too bad, because they really need to improve.)

A lesson that I always share with the businesses and leaders I work with day to day is: Incentives are a powerful tool to motivate team members, but if they get in the way of honest feedback or inspire teams to chase "rewards" instead of true business success, they can also have unintended consequences which put the brakes on the growth of organizations.

After a few additional hiccups in the process, my girlfriend finally received her new car... with the all-weather floor mats. She's very happy with the car, but disappointed with the car-buying experience.

And unfortunately, because of the dealership's decision to connect pay incentives to the survey, the dealership and manufacturer will never know the truth..

This article originally appeared in The American Genius.

THE PETRA EXPERIENCE

The Petra Experience is like a Mental Marathon of focused effort to create a specific set of priorities and a planned process to achieve them... as a team.

Looking to change your business life - forever?

The daily grind of growing a business is tough... it doesn't have to be that way. We work from our own business experiences while focusing on your business – as coach and an accountability partner. We implement the Petra Process in a way that ensures it “sticks” then we stay engaged to keep you on your path to success and less frustration. We don't want this to be just another thing you start – then it gets ignored and finally dies... let's stop that cycle in your business. The Petra Program 'clarifies' what is most important to be done – by whom, by when – **AND** creates an accountability structure to ensure **IT GETS DONE.**

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