

12 Easy Steps to Really

By Joseph P. Sciuilli

If you really like ticking off your parking facility customers, be sure to implement these tried and true rules for really bad customer service. Seems like everybody is doing it these days – must be the coming thing, the latest management fad. Maybe you or your employees have tried a few, yourselves.

And just one note before you start: While the list can be read from the top down, you can also read it from the bottom up. Either way is fine, given the topic.

STEP 1: Hire unmotivated and unfriendly people. It's OK to finally admit it: not everyone's got the personality or the temperament to deal with customers. Hire them anyway, and put them on the front line. They represent you, after all, and you're feeling a bit mad at the world these days too, so as a great naval hero once said, "Damn the customers, full speed ahead!"

STEP 2: Spare all expenses in giving your frontline folks clean working conditions worthy of self-respect. Grimy locker rooms are what we want. Office carpets like a fine wine: aged and stained. Phones and chairs and keyboards only an antiques dealer could love.

STEP 3: Be sure you never discuss the mission of the organization or how it's performing. We're all just working for a buck anyway. Never, ever apply the quote from former General of the Army and President of the U.S. Dwight D. Eisenhower, who said, "Americans either cannot or will not fight to the best of their ability unless they know the whys and wherefores of their orders." Rubbish. Don't substitute "work" for the word fight in this quite.

STEP 4: Instruct your counter people never to get up off their seats when a customer comes in. They should stay where they are at all times and address the customer from wherever they are, even in the back of the office behind the glass partition while in their chairs.

STEP 5: When your folks can't avoid dealing with a customer in person, tell them to avoid eye contact with the poor sap at all costs. Never, ever have them look up from a form they're completing. Speech without eye contact is a winner! A great on-street manager from Philly used to call this "thinly veiled contempt". Like the old saw about voting in Chicago, do it early and often.

STEP 6: This one's pretty important: Bad Attitude. If you don't have it, get it - quickly. Steps 1 to 3 can usually be counted on to cultivate the B.A. for your front-line folks. The customers get in the way of their real job anyway, which is filling-out forms and reports that nobody looks at, and requisitioning items from supply that they'll never receive.

STEP 7: Have your employees perfect the art of implying the customer is dumb, stupid, ignorant, and imposing on their time



for having the audacity to disturb them with a question or ask for assistance. Several techniques come in handy here: the eye roll, the stone face look, the disparaging under-the-breath comment when turning away, and especially the outright lie. Help your folks develop these skills by dosing them regularly on negative feedback, outrageous expectations and blame, or by ignoring them completely.

STEP 8: Ensure a dirty garage, dirty elevators, dirty stairwells, and dirty lobbies, and for extra credit, broken gates that don't raise all the way. If you have all five, name your garage "Dirty Landings". And the dirtier the garage, the better, as it should keep customers from coming back and bothering the employees. Don't forget to take extra credit for rodent remains. Customer complaints about any of these? See Steps 6 and 7.

Bad Customer Service

STEP 9: Keep your garage's internal circulation signs as confusing as possible. Signs that are MIA (missing in action) are even better, as they really come in handy when they're not at decision points arrived at from previous signs. Also calms traffic by omission of information, as drivers will be forced to drive slower (even if they have to drive extra).

STEP 10: Be sure to post any "ramp closed" sign as close to the ramp as possible, never at the head of an aisle or at a point where a fruitless turn can be avoided. And be sure the sign is as small as possible, and hand written (illegibly, if possible).

STEP 11: Pay attention here, as this one's closely related to 9 and 10 above. If by some fluke you have an electronic space counting system, be sure as many of the displays as possible are located behind the wayfinding signs that aren't missing.

STEP 12: Never, ever, get out of your office and regularly

walk through your facilities, talk to your people, address their concerns; and whenever possible, avoid staying on top of your operator's and vendor's performance versus contract terms. In

fact, the vaguer the language in your housekeeping, maintenance and operations contracts, the better! It's a sure-fire way to achieve Steps 1 through 11, so you and your folks won't be bothered by a lot of customers using your facility or daring to speak with attendants, cashiers or managers. They've got to turn in those requisition forms, you know.

The above steps were culled from actual parking experiences.

Locations classified to protect the guilty.

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