

# newsworthy trends

## Employee Ownership Equals True Customer Service

by Robert Spector

(NAPSA)—“Employee empowerment” has become a business cliché—almost as big a cliché as “customer service.”

But clichés become clichés because they are rooted in truth.



As consumers, it is our responsibility to give our business to companies that empower their employees to take “ownership” of our transactions, our interactions, our problems and our complaints.

We don’t care about the company’s process or bureaucracy or rules. We just want someone to listen to us and to take care of us.

Is that too much to ask? I don’t think so.

Don’t let companies roll over you or tell you “that’s just the way things are done around here.” That’s not a satisfactory answer. Demand things. Make noise. Here’s another cliché rooted in truth: the squeaky wheel gets the grease.

Companies that understand the concept of “owning the customer” are the ones who are going to survive; indeed, they are the only ones who *should* survive.

Sprint, for example, has retooled its automated voice system to make it easier for customers to speak to a live customer-service representative. And once the caller connects to a customer-service rep, he or she is “owned” by

that rep, who ensures the customer is completely satisfied before he or she hangs up.

What a great idea! How many times have you had to resolve a problem with a company where you are bounced around from one person to another? How many times have you had to explain and re-explain your situation with each person?

Nordstrom is another example. At Nordstrom, your salesperson is empowered to take care of you in every department in the store. Let’s say you’re a man shopping in the suit department. After you’ve bought your suit, you remember that you need to buy your wife a birthday present in women’s sportswear. Your suit buyer can take you over to the women’s sportswear department and help you with your purchase. You need to present your credit card only once, rather than every time in every department.

If you boil the Nordstrom system down to its essence, it is that Nordstrom gives the people on the front lines—i.e., the salespeople—the freedom to make decisions.

That’s taking ownership.

*Robert Spector is a bestselling author and international speaker on world-class customer service in the New Economy. His latest book is Anytime, Anywhere: How The Best Bricks-and-Clicks Businesses Deliver Seamless Service To Their Customers.*

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