

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

# Customer Service: Time to take it Personally!



Kim Nelson

Independent business people like the applause that they can earn from providing outstanding service. Our employees also like being part of something that gets applause. Customers will applaud exceptional service. Is this opportunity not a *common sense* approach to profitability?

Organizations who deliver authentic, exceptional and consistent customer service gain a significant competitive edge. At Royal and Morphy Containers we believe that customer service is our own damn fault, good bad or indifferent, everything evolves around the customers. Our focus is on responding quickly to our customer's needs. Our speed is vital because "if we snooze we loose." (And this has nothing to do with price!)

The leaders of companies who provide exceptional customer service regularly meet face-to-face with their customers as they regard customer service as the primary means to retain and grow their customer base. They meet with both their devoted customers and the ones who are disenchanted. My personal goal for 2010 is to meet with at least 20 customers. I know it is my job to listen to what they are seeking and respond quickly to their needs.

In addition to listening to those who pay the invoices, we should listen intently to our in-house customers. Our people want to provide the customers with exceptional service. Every person in our organization can make a big contribution to improving our customers' experience. It is vital to me, that every person we employ take personal responsibility for investing in our growth through improving this "customer" experience.

Our competitive edge comes when we are relentlessly focused on delivering exceptional customer service. Nothing great comes easily. It requires us leaders to help maintain the passion in our people to provide the customer with the absolute best service possible every time. Passion is energy; that's how you can recognize it easily.

To ensure we are authentic, we need to walk the talk. Our enthusiastic talk with our customers and people needs to be followed up with systems and processes that support our passion to delight our customers.

I think it is clear that I believe exceptional service begins with us leaders servicing our people.

Right now, I am reading a couple books focused on this very subject; *Leading at a Higher Level* by Ken Blanchard, and *Collapse of Distinction* by Scott McKain. In the first book, I think the following articulates what "servicing the customer" really means;

**Ideal service:** Consistently meeting or exceeding the customers' needs on a day-to-day basis by acting on the belief that service is important.

**Culture of service:** Creating an environment that focuses on serving customers – both internal and external – at the highest level.

**Attentiveness:** Listening in a way that allows you to know your customers and their preferences.

**Responsiveness:** Demonstrating a genuine willingness to serve others by paying attention to and acting on their needs.

**Empowerment:** Sharing information and tools to help people meet customer needs or exceed customer expectations.

It is interesting to note that the first letter of each element spells I CARE. Great customer service impacts people on an emotional level. It creates a connection which is very valuable.

To provide our customers with great service we must decide what we want our customer's experience to be. Rather than just announcing it; we need to plan for it. By listening to our customers and their customers, we can and must empower ourselves so that we learn from them ways to enhance our service. That is how we came up with our own experience of "making it easier."

We can differentiate ourselves with everyone in the organization being committed, motivated and empowered to provide the customer with exceptional service.

More applause is what we all seek. I would like to hear from you about what your organization is doing to get the applause.

Kim Nelson  
GM Royal Containers Ltd.  
CEO Morphy Containers

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**Profit is the applause you get for taking care of your customers and creating a motivating environment for your people.**

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**—Ken Blanchard,  
Author,  
'Leading at a  
Higher Level'**