

Riger

ADVERTISING



Customer service: Building Bridges Instead of Walls

Riger Staff

Please pass this article along to all who might find it of value:

This article was downloaded from www.riger.com. For more free articles on advertising and marketing, visit the "knowledge base" at www.riger.com.

To receive the Riger Update newsletter, subscribe using the "request info" page at www.riger.com.

Ask us. We're listening.

"Whatever Happened to Customer Service?" cries a recent USA TODAY cover story. With the growing movement toward a service economy in our country, and with a growing array of technology tools at the disposal of today's companies — Web, e-mail, interactive voice response systems, automated scan check-out line, chat/instant message, etc. — many businesses are somehow doing worse instead of better in providing service to their customers. The telling data:

- 80% of the nation's companies still haven't figured out how to do a decent job of getting customers the assistance they need, according to Purdue University's Center for Customer Driven Quality.
- 35% of e-mail inquiries to businesses don't get a response within seven days (and 25% never get a response at all)! (Per Forrester's Consumer Technographics Study)
- Two-thirds of the estimated 800,000 consumer complaints passed on over three years to PlanetFeedback.com's trouble-shooting Web site



share the same theme: not getting a response from the company.

- Interactive Voice Response systems are not going over very well at all. 90% of financial services consumers don't like IVR, says Forrester.

- Even when they do reach a live body on the other end of the line, consumers are frustrated. Nearly one in three customers say they have raised their voices at customer service reps. And one in ten have cursed at them! (Per Customer Care Measurement & Consulting)

- "Stupid companies use technology as a wall instead of as a bridge to their customers," says Ramon Avila, a Ball State University professor who specializes in customer relations.

How do consumers like to be handled when they have to query a company with which they are doing business? The Forrester Consumer Technographics Study (2003 survey of 8,000 financial services customers) showed these preferences:

Face-to-face82%
 Phone call handled by a person76%

continued...

A marketing communications company

Conventional mail.....35%
Web.....24%
E-mail21%
Phone call handled by a computer..12%
Chat/instant message4%

But clearly, economics being what they are, American companies have, and will continue to, put technology to work in all of their business processes, particularly customer service. Those companies who can make this technology actually work on behalf of their customers (and

who can blend in the “human touch” methods of contact customers say they really want in the first place) will gain a formidable marketing advantage against their competitors.

“A company’s basic asset is its relationship with its customers,” notes Claes Fornell, the business professor who oversees the American Customer Satisfaction Index at the University of Michigan.

’nuf said!