



Food For Thought: Week of March 24, 2014

Talked Out of a Sale: Lifetime Customer Created

I have a very small, very old, in-ground pool in my backyard. It's not heated and rests under the shade of a very big oak tree. Too cold for everyone in the family but me. Doesn't sound very inviting, I know, but after mowing a Florida lawn in August, there's no other place I'd rather be! So for that reason alone, I try to listen when it's trying to tell me something's wrong.

Hence, my quick story: The pump (about 6 years old) recently started sounding like a parking lot amusement ride engine; super-loud and whining. Obviously, the bearing is very worn and needs replaced. I didn't have great luck with the last service folks I dealt with (another story, perhaps), so I looked around and made an appointment with another company, Triangle Pool Service. The tech, his name was Mark, showed up on-time in a raincoat to deal with a fairly heavy morning downpour. After a quick inspection of the pump, he asked if breakers were being tripped or if the pump ever stops running. I told him it didn't as well as there not being any loss of suction or flow. The diagnosis & solution offered: Mark suggested one of several options. The first would be to replace the motor at \$350. The second option would be to replace the entire pump with something more efficient at \$750. As I'm tightening my grip on my wallet, the third option came as a complete shock to me. Mark said I could run the old pump until it dies, as I could squeeze anywhere between one more day and two more years out of it. I'd just have to deal with the noise in the mean time. He said he'd be more than happy to cancel today's service call and reschedule when the time comes for a replacement.

So why am I sharing this with you?

-Instead of making a quick & surefire sale, Mark created a lifelong customer by offering a solution that worked in the *customer's* best interest; my best interest! Triangle Pool Service will be my first and only call from here on, there's no doubt about that. I've already added them to my address book group, titled "Personal Services".

-Interesting sidebar, as he's pulling out of the driveway, I decided I wanted to send some positive feedback to the company and had already forgotten his name (I'm horrible with names!). I ran outside, asked his name, shook his hand and we talked a few more minutes. We agreed again on the chosen course of action; to use the existing pump until it dies. He points out that while I'm on borrowed time, I should stash a few bucks here & there to save or the replacement. This is a great segue into what comes next. Mark hands me a brochure for a new pump they're working with; a two-speed variable magnet-driven pump that uses the same technology as hybrid cars. It's whisper-quiet, uses a fraction of the energy and claims to save as much as \$50+ per month on the electric bill. Do the math and it pays for itself in a few years (a similar approach used in the windows & appliance industries).

-So did Triangle Pool Service lose a sale today? Absolutely not! As mentioned, they're my new pool service. Moreover, when the time comes, I'll probably forego the \$350 & \$750 options and get the super-duper at \$1400. That's the equivalent of four sales *and* future business from a returning customer.

The Point: As a salesperson, when you qualify your customers, listen to & abide by their needs, and offer solutions that fit the big picture (not just your bottom line), the sales will come naturally, the customers will view your interaction as valuable, and ultimately, loyalty-based repeat business will be assured.

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