



E-LESSON #24: Account Servicing

GENERAL AGENDA

RELATIONSHIP SELLING AND HOW IT PAYS OFF TO HANG OUT WITH YOUR CLIENTS

By Paul Weyland

Cardinal Rule: **NEGLECTED CUSTOMERS CANCEL.** They do. It's a fact. If you don't stay in touch with the client you have on the air, you can bet that you'll get a call that says, "Cancel my spots." It's the client's way of saying, "You used to call me all of the time when you wanted my business. Now that you have it, you never call anymore. So, I'm taking my ball and I'm going home."

Here's a situation to consider. A church wanted to advertise a special Christmas event aimed at recruiting new members. I gave the minister the names of two account executives at two different stations. The minister called each account executive. One of them indicated that avails would be a problem. The other rep managed to work out a schedule. The minister tried several times to call the first AE to take what avails she had, but she wouldn't return his phone call. Too bad for her. He liked the results for the Christmas campaign so much that he's buying an annual contract from the station that took care of him. He says he will never do business with the rep that wouldn't return his calls. Although he's a preacher, he won't turn the other cheek to bad service. And he shouldn't.

After a seminar I did for clients a man approached me and said, "I thought radio or television advertising just didn't work. Now I know that my commercials were inundated with cliches. I was throwing crappy bait out there. Now I understand what my problem was." We talked for a while longer and he left, now convinced that it wasn't the stations he was using, it was the commercials. The next morning his account executive called. She said the client had just called her and "chewed her out." I asked why. She said he asked her if she knew about cliches in advertising before she'd invited him to the seminar. She responded to him that yes, she was aware of them. "Then, why didn't you tell me?" asked the client. Her response to him was, "I didn't think it was my job." Shame on her. Of course it's her job to make sure that the client is casting the best possible bait.

Aren't you sick of bad service? Waiters can't get your order right. The cleaners mess up your clothes. The clerk at the convenience store is talking on the cell phone, oblivious to the fact that the line is getting longer. When you thank someone you've just spent money with, instead of saying, "You're

welcome,” they say, “NO PROBLEM.” Well, it shouldn’t be a PROBLEM. It’s their JOB. Nobody seems to really care about the customer these days. But we’re different in broadcast sales, aren’t we? Unfortunately, no. In many cases, we’re just as bad.

Clients relate stories about horrible broadcast sales service all of the time. “I never see the (expletive deleted) unless he’s trying to sell me something.” Or, “She promised me she’d come back with a good idea and then I never saw her again.” Or, “They ran the wrong copy for two months. I called and they said they’d change it but they never did.” Or, “All they ever do is ask me if I’m doing anything with them this month.” Or, “They send me a new salesperson every six months. I’m sick of retraining broadcast salespeople.”

Client service means so much more than just writing up an order and picking up a check.

The bottom line is this. As a broadcast sales representative, IT IS YOUR JOB to educate your clients and make sure their advertising dollars are spent as efficiently and effectively as possible. IT IS YOUR JOB to make sure that their copy is well-written and not just wallpaper crap. IT IS YOUR JOB to help your clients overcome marketing problems. IT IS YOUR JOB to stay in touch with your clients and help them grow their businesses.

Take care of clients properly and they’ll perceive you as a resource

By educating your clients properly, they perceive you as a resource instead of a pest. When it looks like you know what you’re doing, you have *more control* and the client is more likely to listen to you, trust you and confide in you, as they would listen to, trust and confide in their ACCOUNTANT, DOCTOR or LAWYER. In other words, by gaining the client’s respect you avoid the “tail wagging the dog” syndrome.

People like to do business with people they like and trust. There is no reason why your local direct clients shouldn’t like and trust you. They would if you treated them as well as you’d treat a valued friend. That means taking care of business...being their advocate at your station by:

- Making sure that their copy is well written and that production gets handled in a timely and professional way.
- Making sure that their orders are entered correctly, with the fairest possible rates and good times.
- Making sure that their invoices are correct and sent in a timely fashion.
- Making sure that they have access to you, **even after business hours**, if they need you.

But nowadays, good service just isn’t enough. **Exemplary service** is the new standard. What do I mean by *exemplary service*?

A tutoring service asked me for creative help. We became friends. The owners of the tutoring business had some internal management issues. They weren't getting along very well. They asked me to moderate a discussion to attempt to solve some of their problems. I did. It helped. Now they trust and respect me even more.

A florist told me she never had enough drivers to deliver her arrangements on Valentine's Day. I offered to help her make the deliveries. I still do it. Not one single other vendor bothered to help her on her busiest day of the year. She loves me for that.

I had an office supply shop as a client. I helped them during their busiest day of the year...their annual pen show. I caught a thief stealing a \$300 pen. They still talk about that. I was a hero to that business. I also offered to speak at a few of their weekly sales meetings. I talked about selling. I talked about the strategy of our advertising campaign. They loved it. In fact, I was the only vendor they invited to their Christmas party. I declined. I told them I'd rather be the bartender and I controlled the tempo of that Christmas party. We all had a blast.

I had a car dealer...for years. Although they had an agency, I kept the account direct. The agency hated me...but I didn't care. I did things for the client that the out-of-town agency never even thought about. I invited him and his family to our home for parties and I did sales meetings for him as well. The client and I are still friends. He trusts me implicitly, and I trust him.

Exemplary service

This is what I'm talking about when I say *exemplary service*. Maybe you should get more involved in the lives of your clients. Why not? You're going to hang around with *somebody*, including people you work with. You spend some work time with your clients so why not spend a little personal time and have the reputation for exemplary client service? Do something extraordinary for your clients. Be there for them all of the time, not only when they need you. If you learn something new or different that would benefit your client, don't just sit on it. Let them know what you've learned immediately. You'll really stand out as a resource with that client instead of just being another Chiquita pest.

How much difference does good service really make? Considerable difference, especially when times are tough.

There is an on-line video provided with this lesson.

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