

Company's best friend

[Business](#), [Company](#)



If we do what you suggest the office might get into trouble, if I own up I might get into trouble. On the other hand, the boss will probably accept the mistake was unintentional and make allowances for that, so I'll tell the truth. A Company's Best Friends And Worst Enemies Although it is important to track customer satisfaction it is equally as important to understand their behaviour and attitudes. Customer behaviour can be categorised into four basic types, namely Loyalists, Defectors, Mercenaries and Hostages.

The Loyalist and the Apostle Most cases the Loyalist is a customer who is completely satisfied and keeps returning to the company. The Loyalist is a company's bedrock. The customer's needs and the company's product or service are well matched. These are often the easiest customers to serve. Within the Loyalist camp there are often customers who are so satisfied, and whose experience far exceeds their expectations, that they share their experiences with us. These people are Apostles and quite clearly a company's best friend.

The Defector and the Terrorist Dissatisfied customers who have experienced poor levels of service and who have encountered total failures in service will defect to the competition. An opportunity to convert the Defector to a Loyalist and even an Apostle usually arises at the point of customer complaint. Failure to convert dissatisfied customers prior to defection may turn them into Terrorists. Terrorists are the most dangerous of all the customer types, as they will be quite willing to tell others of their bad experiences and share their anger and frustration. This can quite often mean sharing their experiences with the media and therefore Terrorists are quite clearly a company's worst enemy.

The Mercenary This is another customer who can make a company's life misery. Even though they may be completely satisfied, they exhibit almost no loyalty and are often expensive to acquire and quick to depart. They chase low prices, buy on impulse, seek the best deal or seek change for the sake of change. As there is no long-term loyalty a return is not gained for the investment in their satisfaction.

The Hostage This type of customer experiences the worst levels of service but must accept it as there is no alternative supplier to defect to. Many companies who have a captive customer base (e. g. the Water companies) often see little or no reason to respond to the plight of Hostages " The customers can't go anywhere else so why bother to correct their problems" is an all too frequently spoken phrase.

There are two main reasons why a company should bother, firstly, the competitive environment may change (British Telecom once had a captive customer base) and secondly, hostages are difficult and expensive to serve. They may be trapped but still take every opportunity to complain and this can have a devastating effect on company moral and ultimately on the cost effectiveness of the company as a whole. You may not have ever heard of Jo Gurrard, but he is in the Guinness Book of Records as the most successful salesman.

How many people do you know personally? Well Jo says it about 250 on average. Jo developed his law at a catholic funeral where it is customary to hand out photographs of the deceased as a memory of their life. Jo was bemused as to how the undertakers knew how many photographs to have

made, so he asked. He was told " Oh 250 is usually about right" This may not be always exact but if you know 250 people you could tell them about a poor service experience and they could each tell 250 other about the poor experience and so on. Dealing With Complaints.

No matter how hard we try there will be occasions when the level of service given to your customers will fall below an acceptable level causing them to complain. Handling complaints is an important part of customer care, as complaining customers give us a unique opportunity to identify where we are going wrong and to turn Defectors and Terrorists into Loyalists and maybe even Apostles.

Sprockets Engineering are a well established company, with over ten years of experience in manufacturing precision turned parts and pressings for the automotive industry. The company is a family owned business, who prides themselves in high quality work. This is reflected by their policy of `Right First Time - Every Time` for all levels of the organisation, this is especially true of the customer service staff who are relied on to maintain the company's profile.

The company has recently been awarded a contract with Hyrindu, a major motor manufacturer, for components on their new executive class of car. The directors are totally committed to meeting all of the delivery requirements of the contract as it is a major achievement for a small company to be awarded a contract of this size, having beaten some large competitors for the contract in the tendering rounds.

In the first three months of the contract there have been a few teething problems with a new machine that was purchased especially for the contract and this has effected the delivery of the components due to machine down time and loss of production. This has now been rectified and production seems to be running well. On Thursday afternoon Matt, the production supervisor receives a call from Hyrindu who have moved ahead of their production schedule and need next weeks order by Monday at the latest. Matt agrees to this and promises delivery before 2. 00 P. M. on Monday.

Immediately after putting the telephone down Matt realises that he is not at work for one week, from tomorrow, due to an allocation of annual leave which he must take before the end of the financial year. However this should not effect Hyrindu's order as the department is well ahead of their production and Simon, the Production Manager, will return from paternity leave tomorrow, after two weeks off Matt leaves a detailed message for Simon on his office answering machine and tells Adrian the machinist to make sure that Simon receives the message regarding Hyrindu's order.

On Friday morning Simon returns to work to a mountain of problems, Adrian is off ill due to food poisoning, his desk has piles of unanswered correspondence on it and he is called into a management meeting at 10. 30 AM which runs through to 3. 30 PM. After a busy day Simon retrieves his messages from his answering machine at about 4. 00 P. M. and to his horror receives Matt's message regarding Hyrindu's order requirements just as the whistle goes and the workforce leaves for the weekend.

Weighing up the situation, Simon decides that there is nothing he can do as no overtime is currently allowed due to a cost cutting exercise, he decides to wait until Monday when Adrian will be back and they should be able to catch up then. On Monday morning, with the problem of meeting Hyrindu's order on his mind, Simon gets into work especially early. Unfortunately, on arrival he discovers that Adrian is still off ill and realises that the only way that he will meet the order is to operate the machine himself

It has been sometime since he has operated this machine and quickly finds that his rate of production falls way below the required standard. At 2. 00 P. M., even after working through lunch, he finally accepts that he cannot meet the requirements of Hyrindu's order. Just then the Production Director walks into the machine shop, explains to Simon that Hyrindu are on the telephone and he demands to know why the order has not been met. He adds that he wants Simon to ring Hyrindu back and explain why the order has not been received and apologise for the shortfall.