

Applying the Ideas

1. Suppose you are considering starting an appliance repair business. What are some convenience services you could possibly apply to exceed customer expectations? Be creative. Brainstorm as many ideas as possible.
2. Of all the businesses you deal with, which ones do the best job of giving A-plus convenience/speed? Which do the worst job? How could the poor performers do better?
3. Select a business you are familiar with that does not currently use virtual waiting techniques. Explain how it could do so.
4. Write a report describing how the increase in online shopping has affected customer demand for efficient, convenient service. How could a “brick-and-mortar” store selling similar products compete?

Consider this Case

“Service” at the Donut Shop

Early one morning Harry found himself hungry, alone, and lost in the land of no customer service as he stumbled into a donut shop. It was a rainy, gray morning and he was tired. Cars were parked at odd angles because the lines on the lot had long ago faded. The parking lot was dirty and the trashcans overflowed.

Inside were disorganized lines of people, most wearing parkas, waiting to buy donuts. There appeared to be no systematic way of serving customers. The bold ones stepped up and demanded service while the more timid (or courteous) hoped for attention from the clerk. Harry waited for about seven minutes as the two clerks repeatedly took orders, disappeared into the back room, reappeared, and took peoples' money. All along Harry observed the uncleared, coffee-stained counter where he soon would sit to eat his donut. It hadn't been cleared recently, and it apparently wasn't going to be cleared now. Customers groaned, as the advertised two-for-one sale didn't apply when they ordered donuts of different prices, and the clerks explained with bored, unsmiling expressions.

Harry noticed a middle-aged woman (could she be the manager?) sitting on a crate just outside the back door smoking a cigarette and reading a tabloid newspaper. She seemed oblivious to the dismal scene in the shop.

Harry finally reached the head of the line and came face to face with a 17-year-old girl who had been condemned to serve him. Something in her teenage face told him that all was not well in the service economy. Harry asked her how she liked her job.

She looked him straight in the eye and said, “It sucks!”

Probes

1. Assume you are the owner of this donut shop. What would you do? What specific behaviors would you seek to change?
2. Focus on the problems of slow service. What could be done, specifically, to improve this?
3. To what extent might the slow service be a source of employee irritation and dissatisfaction? Explain.