

Perception

Perception is truly the customer's reality. Let's just say you're driving down the street and you are trying to find someplace to take your significant-other out to lunch. You pull up in front of a restaurant that you happen to see, and look at the outside of it. You can see that the paint is chipped and cracked, and you can probably tell it hasn't been painted for about 20 years. You look at the windows and you can see a sheen of grease on the inside, where it has not been cleaned for a few months. The "OPEN" sign is hanging crooked in the window and it has scotch tape all over it. You look at the front door, and there are finger prints all over it, so you know it has not been cleaned for a while either.

Now, are you going to go in there and eat? I don't know about you, but my perception is; if you can't take care of the stuff that I can see, what are you doing to the stuff that I can't see; and that would worry me. My perception is that the place is a dump. I'm not eating there and I'll drive on. Now, the reality might be that the food is fabulous. Maybe they spent all of their money on the inside, on the kitchen or the interior décor. It may be fabulous on the inside, but my perception became my reality, and I moved on.

Let's look at another example. You walk into a bank branch which is very busy, and there are 20 customers lined up waiting for a teller. You notice that there are 3 teller windows in this branch, but there are only 2 tellers that are actually working in the windows. However, there is a third person that is working behind the tellers doing some other miscellaneous work. Guess, who all 20 people in line are all staring at? Do you think they're staring at the two tellers who are working and bringing the line down? Of course not; they're looking at the third person behind the tellers, wondering, "*What is that other person doing ignoring us?*" Since there is a window available, how come that person can't come over and help bring the line down? If that person is qualified to be behind the tellers, they must be qualified to at least be one of them. The customer will punish you emotionally for that internal conversation they are having with themselves about their perceptions.

And, guess what else is happening? The two tellers who are working diligently to help bring that line down are wondering to themselves why all the customers are in such bad moods. They can't figure it out, and maybe they even treat the customers poorly in return. Well, the reason the customers are in a bad mood, is because they've had about 15 minutes to stand in line and look at that one person who they perceived as indifferent towards helping them. This generated all sorts of anxiety, and the two tellers that get punished by the waiting customers are the ones that are working as hard as they can. Perception is not always fair.

Take a look at your work area, look at yourself, and look at all of that from the customer's perspective. That's what I call, T. L. C. "**Think Like a Customer**". Be aware of what customers could misperceive. For those that find it challenging to remove yourself from your business and look at it objectively; ask family, friends, or other people that will be honest with you. Ask if you can borrow their eyes, so that you can see yourself and your business from the customer's perspective.