

The Words We Use

If you are trying to establish a customer service culture within your organization, it is crucial to pay attention to the words you use when communicating with employees. The most important word to avoid when talking about customer service, is “program”. For some reason, many companies try to refocus their employees on the importance of customer service by occasionally creating a new “program” that will cure all of their problems and get everyone on board the customer service bandwagon.

Guess how long a “program” lasts in the eyes of employees? The average response from employees nationwide is 90 days. We have trained our employees that “programs” have an expiration date and they will go away at some point, and be replaced by another “program”. Many companies discovered this little secret and decided to fool the employees by creating a new word, which is “initiative”. Guess what? Employees are not fools, because they quickly figured out it has the same expiration date as the word “program”.

Anytime you are talking about customer service, I would highly recommend you use the word “culture”, because that means it is woven deep into the fabric of the organization and is not going away. Your customer service culture should be the topic of conversation at every meeting you have with employees and most written communication. If you stop talking about it, the employees will perceive that it is no longer important to you. The lack of attention to the culture will also give it an expiration date if you are not careful.

Employees will also weigh the importance of the culture by the amount of time, attention and money spent on it. I highly recommend providing employees with constant new information about how they can exceed the customer’s expectations and enhance the culture. If you are going to provide employees with training seminars, then make sure you make the training an event that is worthy of their time. Have balloons, banners, lively music, and a facility that lets them know that you are willing to invest in their future. People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care. As soon as your employees see how much you care about their future and the amount you are willing to invest in them, they will find more ways to invest in you and the company.