

## Making A Difference With Effective Employees

### Harriet And The \$6 Burger

by Fred Firestone

*Friday, November 30.* I wake up with one thing on my mind. Hardee's \$6 burger for only \$3.95. Seems like every other TV commercial message has been beckoning me.

Six hours later I walk into the Hardee's at Oakland near Hampton. Immediately I'm taken aback. The place is strikingly clean and I'm greeted by someone who really seems interested in greeting me. (Usually the greetings you get in fast-food places are as plastic as the utensils.) I place my order to a smiling face. I'm told "thank you" for my business and told that my meal will be *brought out to me*. This is different. A short while later, Harriet (Hardee's employee) appears with my \$6 burger. She asks me if there is anything else she can get for me. She tells me to enjoy my meal and she really means it. After I finish my lunch, Harriet appears and clears the table. She wants to know whether I liked it and if there is anything else she can get me. A drink refill would be nice. Harriet is not reading off cue cards—no script; she is genuine.

I approach the manager. "Putting aside how good that \$6 burger was, your brand is only as strong as the ability of the Harriet's in your crew to deliver a good buying experience. How do you do it?" She puts me in touch with the director of corporate affairs. Twelve days later I'm to show up for the lunch shift to get a first-hand experience.

*Wednesday, Dec. 12.* It's 11 a.m. and I'm sitting down with Dayna Pagano, regional training manager. She explains that the company's objective is to make each and every person who walks in the door feel like they're a *guest*—not a customer. Not much unique here—I've heard it all before. "Every company pays lip service to the concept. How do you get Harriet and the crew to deliver?" I ask her to show me the

training manual chapter Harriet must have memorized. "There is no chapter," Dayna tells me. I'm intrigued.

Dayna, a veteran of 18 years (started as crew person), tells me the answer is simple. "That's how we do things." She elaborates.

- Commitment starts from the top. All managers go through a nine-week in-store training program. Litmus test for successful training is that they need to *love* serving customers; if they don't, they don't make it.
  - Managers are clear on their mission to treat their customers as guests. Their attitude needs to be "No Excuses...Do it Right!" They need to set the example for employees, be vocal about their commitment and reward employees they catch "Doing it Right."
  - Recruit the right people. Crew people have to be able to communicate; you can't teach friendliness.
  - Take actions to create a fun and enjoyable work environment. A happy employee will not be rude to his/her guests.
- Impressive. Now, let's talk with Harriet. She tells me she loves working there and she treats her guests as if they were coming over to her home to visit. Amazing! Does Harriet get paid more than others who work in the fast food business? Doubtful.
- Too many businesses just don't get it. They might have a slam dunk "customer commitment policy" and it might be beautifully displayed,



*Fred Firestone, shown above, was so impressed by the customer service he received at a local Hardee's restaurant, he decided to experience it firsthand. He volunteered to work the counter for an afternoon.*

but for a number of reasons they don't have people who deliver.

What does this have to do with "Selling Tips"? Everything. Whether you're in the fast food business, the accounting business, selling high-voltage equipment, funeral services or mortgages, the differentiation game plan is always the same. You need to determine what customer-responsive values you can bring to the market place that are not being offered by the competition and then ensure you are delivering those values in your "moments of truth"—interactions between you and your market where people walk away with a perception of your service image. Integrity selling only happens after you've established this foundation.

Oh, the \$6 burger was good.

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