

CUSTOMER SERVICE IS A BIG BLIND SPOT



By Lorin Anderson, President

Customers usually don't tell you they aren't satisfied with your product, they just leave and go elsewhere. Lately I've become quite concerned that golf instruction as a whole is not taking care of customers as well as we often assume. In my role at Golf Channel Academy I am privy to Secret Shopper data on the Golf

Channel Academy locations. If you were at the Proponent Summit last fall in Dallas you would have seen **Jackie Beck's** presentation on the mediocre service provided by many of those who were secret shopped. And these include some of the most respected academies in the game!

Problems covered the gamut: Phone calls not returned for days, online information request forms submitted by never responded to, no phone number listed on their website's homepage, websites that are not responsive to mobile viewing, outdated prices and expired program dates still listed and websites where it was impossible to make a purchase or book a lesson.

If you endured this lack of service when you were in purchasing mode, you'd likely skip to the next option or give up completely. This reminds me of a comment an industry consultant made recently, claiming that "a guest sees more in an hour than a host sees in a year." This consultant said that 82 percent of golf courses do not survey their customers and 88 percent don't use Secret Shoppers to independently view their operations. I'm guessing those numbers are close to 100 percent for golf instruction operations.

The fact is, customer service and ease of doing business does matter to growing your business and it reflects poorly on your brand when phone calls don't get returned or visitors can't sign up for instruction. As marketing gurus point out, if you don't measure it, you can't manage it. The first step is measuring how you and your staff stack up on all the critical customer-service touch points.

Do you survey your students annually or randomly for their feedback? Do you train your staff on your customer-service expectations and then check to see if your staff is following your guidelines?

Right now we're working with our partners at Golf Channel on a way to provide resources to Proponent Group members that will solve many of these customer-service issues. We expect to have at least one major announcement on this front before the end of the year that could be a game-changer for many of you, affecting how you interface with current and potential students.

Have Course Owners Simply Given Up?

Another startling finding came recently from **Ian James** over at RetailTribe, which has been conducting its own Secret Shopper due diligence on behalf of clients. They would call a course and say that they were a typical recreational golfer looking to take some golf lessons.

The results were simply stunning. You would not believe how many places told them they didn't have a teacher they could recommend at their facility and the golfer should call XYZ competitor down the road instead.

Have we reached the point where a significant number of facilities have given up on providing quality instruction? The full story will shock you and if you come to the Summit, I'm sure Ian will be happy to fill you in on all of the gory details. **PG**

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