

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

Taking Care of Business is More than Just the Lesson



By Lorin Anderson, President

I recently had the opportunity to visit a golf academy and saw some things that were completely incongruent with its reputation for providing high-quality instruction. I was on-site for half a day and noticed signage around the building printed on uncoated paper that was yellowing and curling at the edges. I saw students come in to pay only to find a reception desk left unattended by the staffers who cover it—apparently they all went to lunch at the same time.

The phone had 13 unanswered messages. It was 90 degrees outside and the refrigerator of bottled water was bare. No one had ordered more inventory in advance of the multi-day golf school currently in session. Many of its participants looked pretty parched. To top it off, I went into the restroom and found no soap in the dispenser and no toilet paper in the stalls. Hmm.

These are Golf Operations 101 issues, not rocket science. Understand that your students expect more than just golf instruction – they expect a pleasant, hassle-free experience... every time they visit. When you call a salon to book an appointment, you expect someone to answer the phone. If you go to a nice restaurant for dinner, you expect soap in the bathroom. You walk around any facility that charges fees for services wondering: “Do these people care if I’m happy and contented while I’m here?”

So, a couple of important points: First: Do you have any idea what your students really think about your programs, people and facilities? If the answer is no that’s because

listening to customers can be humbling. We tend to duck and avoid it. You should be the exception to the rule and survey students randomly throughout the year. You can use Survey Monkey to craft a simple customer feedback survey and send it as follow-up after someone takes their first lesson, or attends a golf school or clinic series.

Secondly: What do you do when you find out that your customer service or customer experience has fallen short? The answer experts all agree on is this: Speak to the person who has the issue with your business. Tell them, “We heard what you said, and here’s what we’re going to do.” Then follow up quickly and implement the change that will alleviate the issue in the future. The onus is on you to exceed the golfer’s expectation, not on the student to tell you something is wrong.

I realize that things can get very busy, but bear in mind that recreation and entertainment options abound and your customers have lots of other things they can do with the money they spend on your golf instruction, including moving to your competition. As you might imagine, the academy I visited was completely unaware of the frustrations their customers were experiencing. They only focused on their instruction content and not on creating an enjoyable experience.

It was obvious that people were leaving their academy that day disappointed. Certainly some left and didn’t come back or spent less than they had planned. The key to rebuilding trust and confidence is authenticity. If you’ve screwed up, own up. Fix the problem so it doesn’t happen again. People are very forgiving if you show them you really are listening and you wish to improve. Isn’t that exactly what you ask from your students?

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