



KEEPING THE CUSTOMERS YOU SERVE

**PTD SUGGESTS ACTING LIKE CSR
IN DELIVERING CRM**

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From my perspective, I'd like to share a few thoughts about customer retention. I've been a professional truck driver (PTD) for about 15 years in a for-hire fleet pulling a dry van. Previously, I worked in the corporate world for about seven years, after serving in the Army for 22 years.

DURING MY TIME IN THE CORPORATE WORLD, I WORKED FOR A LARGE COMPANY. MY JOB TITLE WAS CUSTOMER SUPPORT MANAGER. The 23 customer service reps (CSRs) that reported to me were responsible for handling approximately 200 million dollars of business annually from customers throughout the northeastern states. One thing you learn when you have customers spending millions of dollars with your company every year is that they can be very demanding.

Another is that the CSR responsible for taking care of their orders has to be very good, fully engaged and very serious about what he or she does. Based on the time and expense required to attract new customers, my company understandably had no tolerance for losing an account because one of my CSR's got mouthy with a customer or messed up an order.

Very Important Lesson

Why is this important to you? Well, I learned a very important lesson that has served me well to this day. During a customer visit, I

asked what we were doing right, what we were doing wrong, and what we could improve. The customer told me his company was happy, but also went on to tell me something surprising. He said that if we ever changed the CSR who handled the account, their 10 million dollars of annual purchases would likely move elsewhere.

I asked why. He said his CSR handled orders accurately, was honest and trustworthy, immediately provided notice if any problems arose, and always had the customer's best interests in mind. I thanked the customer for his insights and returned to the office. It was then that the light went on. The CSR who handles daily contact has a great impact on customer relationship management (CRM) and the customer's willingness to continue doing business with your company.

Now, back to PTD. I drive for Dick Lavy Trucking, a small company headquartered in Bradford, Ohio that has about 200 trucks. Maybe you've seen one of our blue rigs on the road. Like every company, our customers are important. But, because we are smaller, our customer base is smaller. As a driver, this means the chances are good that I will be interacting with some of our customers many times. You may think you have little to do with attracting and keeping customers. Actually, you may have more impact than you'll ever know.

Every time you pick up or deliver a load, the customer contacts in shipping and receiving are observing how you handle yourself. Did you arrive on time? Was your equipment in good repair and ready to receive or deliver their freight? Did you have the right pickup or delivery information? How did you conduct yourself? Were you concerned about their needs and those of their customers? Were you friendly? All of these questions may not sound important, but believe me, they are.

Hundreds of trucking companies and thousands of drivers would love to take away some, if not all of your customers. It's not always about the lowest cost. You're a key part of a larger value proposition. Ask yourself why customers stay with your company, even in the face of lowball pricing? At least in part, it's because of the good relationships that you and other drivers have helped establish. So yes, we as PTDs are also CSRs involved in CRM.



L-to-R: Bill Terry, Jen Kapinski, Danielle Berkstresser and Judy King



Shining Examples

Now, if you're still a little fuzzy about what I'm saying, let me give you an example that I'm sure you've seen and probably know well. This time, however, you're the customer. Like all drivers, I have certain truckstops I really like. My favorite happens to be the TA in Breezewood, PA. Like many TAs and Petros, this one has all the amenities we like: good restaurants, fast food when we're in a hurry, good showers, a nice lounge, a great travel store and more. This one happens to be my favorite because of three very special people: Danielle, Jen and Judy.

Danielle Berkstresser, the Assistant Manager of TA Truck Service and the fuel desk, has been there for 17 years. Jen Kapinski works the first shift on the fuel desk and has been there for about 15 years. Judy King works the graveyard shift and has been there about 11 years. If you ever stop there and meet one of them, you'll see why they're so special. It's their people skills. It's almost like they know every driver who walks up to the counter.

They know about their families. They know about where the drivers come from.

It's amazing to watch. And they always have smiles on their faces. They always have some kind words. The main thing you see when watching and interacting with them is this isn't a put-on. This isn't a show. They are really just down-to-earth, good people. And because of the way they treat drivers, many of us have become regular customers. I'm sure the management at TA Breezewood knows how good Danielle, Jen and Judy are, and how much repeat business they attract, because of how they interact with customers.

As drivers, we need to remember people like Danielle, Jen and Judy, and need to try being like them. They are shining examples of what it takes to build solid, long-term customer relationships. From this driver's perspective, we also need to understand that part of being a professional truck driver involves representing our companies in a manner that helps to build and maintain customer relationships.

See you out on the road. Be safe! ©