

## The Customer Comes Last?

By Patrick H. McGaughey CPF, IOM

Ever had a bad day? And decide to share it? It's a scenario we see every day in every workplace coast to coast; "Bob, how are you today?" Bob replies, "Crappy. Don't ask."

It appears "Bob" has not taken care of the first customer which is him. There is a minimum list of four key people we need to address before we ever approach the paying customer in our businesses. The first "customer" is that person we see in the mirror every morning. How do we treat that person? If we don't stop and take stock of that person in the mirror, the next people are in for a not-so-special treat.

Who is the next "customer?" Usually, it's the people we live with. How do we treat the people we live with every day? Do we ever stop and take stock in our relationships with our spouse and family members? (This is why I often cringe when I hear companies advertise, "We treat you like family!") We can often be rude, short or just plain mean to other family members without even thinking because hey, they're family.

To be successful, we must believe and understand that customer service is an ongoing practice. Just like a doctor has to practice medicine, we have to practice customer service. To do this well, we must practice with every person we come in contact with, not just the paying (last) customer.

We should look in the mirror every morning and smile. We should stop and pay a little more attention to our family. We should leave the house with plenty of time to be courteous and allow other drivers the right of way. We should leave any bad day or experience at the door before entering the workplace and we should keep practicing customer service skills with our internal customers; other employees.

If we don't start practicing great customer service skills with ourselves, our families, people on the commute and our team members, the paying customer won't have a chance. It's not going to be easy and that's why we must practice. A doctor calls her business a practice because medicine can never be an exact science. Her patients may have the same disease but because each of them has different DNA, she must practice with each patient individually. It's just like every customer we meet. They all have a little different DNA. They have different issues and problems. That's why we must keep practicing.

To practice well, start by smiling at the first customer in the mirror every morning. If we practice this, the last customer and all those in between will feel like number one.

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