



## ***ROAD SIGNS FOR SUCCESS®***

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**By Jim Whitt**

Customer service is getting to be an oxymoron. It is almost to the point that you expect service to be mediocre at best. Poor service is so much the norm that I rarely bother to complain about it anymore. I figure nothing will be done anyway so the best bet is to just go on and hope for a better outcome next time. I went through a fast-food drive-through the other day and placed an order that didn't fit the prescribed number 1, 2 or 3 offering. When I got to the window I discovered I was overcharged. I tried to explain it to the young man at the window but he couldn't figure out that the total should be different than what his computer monitor told him. I just smiled, paid him and drove on. It wasn't worth the dollar or so difference to spend my time educating him.

This experience isn't limited to fast-food franchises. I had a less than satisfactory experience with a medical professional recently. I wrote the good doctor a letter to ask for a conference to discuss it. After several days and no response I called his office. The receptionist informed me that indeed they had received my letter but the doctor was on vacation and he would call me when he returned. I received no such call. I called once again and managed to connect with him. When I expressed my dissatisfaction, he told me he didn't like the direction the conversation was taking. I didn't much care for it myself. I had just spent a couple of thousand dollars with him but he didn't think my complaint was worthy of his time. I can accept a teenager in a burger joint not being up to par but I expect more from someone who has the smarts to make it through medical school. In his case it's just a matter of not caring. I'll never do business with him again.

But just when I was about to give up on ever receiving good customer service in this life I was given a few glimmers of hope. I ran my cell phone through the washing machine about a year ago and took it to Cellular Phone Repair Center. They dried it out and it worked until recently. I took it back in and it needed a new battery. They charged me only \$15 for a \$50 battery because I had it repaired with them in the first place. It crashed again and they repaired it at no charge. Shocked, I told the young man behind the counter that I was impressed with their customer service. "That's all we have to sell, sir," was his response. I thanked him and wondered why the doctor hadn't figured that out.

Then an overzealous car wash ate the rubber grip off the Roll-N-Lock bed on my pickup. I went to Line-X Truck Accessories to order a replacement. When it came in the young man asked if I had a couple of minutes for him to install it. I did and he did. He asked if it was still under warranty. I told him I didn't think so and asked what I owed. He told me to forget it. Shocked once again I told him how impressed I was with their customer service. He told me that was all they had to sell. Hmmm. I ordered new custom-made floor mats for my pickup.

Then Sondra and I ate supper the other night at Tin Star, a place that is a hybrid between fast-food and a sit-down restaurant. You order and pay at the counter and your food is served when ready. Steven, the young man who brought our meal was especially bright and cheery. He asked what else we needed. We needed some mustard and pickles. He brought a dish with mustard, pickles, lettuce and tomatoes arranged in a nice presentation. When we were finished he asked if we would like a couple of to-go cups for our tea. He didn't just bring the cups, he brought them back filled. When I told Steven how impressed I was with his service he said that he once read that life was about building relationships. Keep an eye on Steven. He'll go far.