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**"Self-praise is for losers. Be a winner. Stand for something. Always have class, and be humble." » John Madden (1936-2021)**



## People > Systems

Recent experiences with a national shipping company got me pondering how even the most hi-tech systems in the world still rely on good and honest people to function properly.

After a retailer misplaced one of our orders, they attempted to overnight an item to arrive by noon on December 24<sup>th</sup>.

We were home waiting. At 1:00 PM, we received an email stating that the driver attempted delivery at 9:45 AM, but no one answered.

This was obviously false. We have a video doorbell as well as security cameras that had captured all comings and goings that day.

No one attempted a delivery.

When we called the shipping company and told them this, the customer service rep simply reread the obviously false statement and said they'd attempt delivery on the "next business day."

Two days later, we received a notice late in the day that a delivery was attempted, but "the business" was closed. Sure.

More phone calls ensued, and more falsehoods were repeated.

Four days later, our packages had not arrived. We were then told by the shipper that they probably weren't coming.



## Back to the Start?

My wife and I have spoken and/or interacted with well over a dozen customer service or sales reps (or customer support "systems") over the past two weeks.

To be fair, most were competent. Some, however, were...well...the opposite of that.

The thing that most consistently annoyed me was the fact that each follow-up call seems to start you back at zero.

You might spend 5 or 10 or 20 minutes on the phone answering questions (either via a phone menu or to a live person), telling your story, asking for help, sometimes getting advice and information from the rep.

After a while, you might even believe they understand the issue and are working to solve it.

Heaven help you, however, if you need to be handed off to another rep or if you have to call back later for any reason.

It's often as if you never contacted that business in the first place.

And it is only human nature to be a little terser and more annoyed when having to explain yourself or ask the same questions again...and again...and again.

I sometimes (okay...sometimes) try to remind myself that the person asking the exact same questions I've just answered is trying to help.

The very scripted, "We're sorry for the inconvenience," didn't exactly ring true.

Then, later that evening, a driver came to our door with our packages.

When my wife explained what had been going on, he apologized.

He said, "This happens all the time now. Some of these drivers just don't care. If a signature is required, it gives them an easy lie. They say they attempted delivery when they haven't. I just want you to know I'm so sorry about this. I've been delivering supposedly undeliverable packages all day."

The young man seemed sincere. He stated, "This isn't who we are. We need to be better than this."

After days of feeling completely disrespected and deceived by that company, his apology helped.

In the end, I couldn't help but ponder how this worldwide operator, with some of the most modern technology and sophisticated systems imaginable still depends on good people who actually care about their jobs to deliver on their promises.

Whether you're a national operator with a large network or a smallish institution, the quality of your people is still what defines you most.

As we navigate these challenging times, make sure your own good people clearly see that you appreciate those who always deliver for your own customers.

It's not really their fault that they are dealing with a blank slate. And, well, sometimes it is.

Some folks apparently would rather have you repeat information you've already given. I sometimes wonder if they're pretending to be a D.A. setting you up for a perjury charge if your story changes.

It would be almost comical if it were not so frustrating and didn't happen so often.

Whenever I'm speaking to someone who is truly helpful, I often ask for their name and if it is possible to ask specifically for them if I have to call back.

Some people are happy to do that, likely because it signals they'll get good survey reviews.

Most often, however, service reps at large operations can't guarantee you can reach them individually.

This is an area in which smaller institutions (or large ones who still strive to give that level of attention) can stand out in an ever-more-remote world.

Having frontline folks and/or customer support reps take personal ownership (by name) of resolving a customer's issue, and clearly communicating that to a customer is a powerful relationship builder.

Will you and your teammates take ownership today?

**"And still I am learning." » Michelangelo (at age 87)**

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