

THE IN-STORE ADVANTAGE



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"The difference between a stumbling block and a steppingstone is how high you raise your foot." » Benny Lewis

Who's Gonna Answer It?

I recently received a recall notification from the manufacturer of our newest vehicle.

This is the second recall of a one-year-old car, each for a different problem.

(We do still like the car, however.)

That said, the dealership we purchased from has reminded me of something I've suggested to leaders for years.

We need to pay a lot closer attention to who we let answer our phones.

Yes, even in the everything online, technology-driven world of today, phone etiquette matters.

A lot.

In this case, the person I finally reached about my second recall, couldn't have been more indifferent.

There wasn't an "Oh, I'm so sorry," or "You know, that's a great vehicle and this is so unusual," or anything.

Apparently, these recalls are inconvenient for them. I suppose I should have apologized for bothering the fellow.

Roger That

While I've spoken to hundreds of groups over the years, I've never given a commencement address.

I'm not just talking about college.

I mean high school, beauty school, dog obedience school...you name it. I've never given one.

When watching any, I smile thinking that the best thing the speaker could do is ask graduates and guests to look at their watches and promise to be done in under 10 minutes.

The audience would be thrilled. No one is taking notes at a commencement address. They're usually mentally checked out.

All that said, there was a commencement speech that hit one of my social media feeds recently that did get my attention.

Roger Federer has been one of my favorite athletes for over two decades.

He has always struck me as a total class act. The way he has handled both tremendous success and heartbreaking defeats is a masterclass in poise.

He opened his commencement speech at Dartmouth by pointing out that it was only the second time in his life he had stepped foot onto a college campus.

I found myself more irritated by a complete lack of empathy for a customer with a problem (of their making) than by the recalls themselves.

After taking a deep breath and enduring awkward silences, I scheduled an appointment for the repair.

Later in the week, a conflict arose, and I had to change the appointment.

When I called back, I reached an equally disinterested (practically sleepy sounding) fellow who told me I really didn't have an appointment because it's first come, first served.

When I told him that his counterpart had given me an appointment, he said, "Well, he may have given you a time, but I'm telling you it doesn't matter. It's first come, first served."

I knew that one of those guys was wrong.

I also knew I really didn't want to deal with either.

At that moment, I vowed we would never buy anything from that dealership again.

We'll likely warn friends away, as well.

No amount of showroom upgrades, direct marketing (we get both snail mail and email from them), or online and broadcast advertising will change the impression a couple of poorly handled phone exchanges made.

In other instances, there have been times in which a phone chat with the right person has left me feeling better about a company than even before a problem arose.

Telephone conversations, especially when addressing problem resolution or tough questions, make emotional impressions that will either strengthen or damage relationships.

What impact will you make when the phone rings today?

He then said, "And for some reason...you are giving me a doctorate degree."

Whether that was a subtle dig at college degrees or an innocent comment, it was funny.

He then went on to give one of the best commencement speeches I've heard in years.

Something that stuck in my mind was his pointing out that he had won 80% of his matches during his professional career.

That's a staggeringly high winning percentage.

And yet, he only won 54% of the total points he played in those matches.

Even the most successful tennis players in the world deal with moments of failure as often as success.

He continued, "You cannot dwell. It's only a point. When you're playing a point, it is the most important thing in the world. But when it's behind you, it's behind you."

One of his major themes was that failure is part of the process of succeeding. You're not going to enjoy it, but you need it to grow and improve.

To stretch the metaphor, our days are like tennis points.

Some go just according to plan, while others run us ragged, only to end up with us coming up short. But each new day presents new opportunities to compete, learn, improve, and grow.

You will win some and you will lose some. But champions don't dwell.

Win or lose, they play the next point.

Are you fully playing the point you're in right now?

"Effortless is a myth." » Roger Federer

Dave Martin, author of The In-Store Advantage, has become one of the most prolific writers in the banking industry. His keynote presentations, seminars, and podcasts have an authenticity and humor that brings teams of all sizes and seniority levels together.

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