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### **The Impact of Customer Service**

Prior to working in customer service, I would walk into a store without paying any attention to the cashier greeting me. Today, I fully understand how cashiers might feel when their greetings are ignored. Especially working in my store, I can understand that cashiers are required to greet every customer to provide excellent customer service. When customers walk into my store, there is always a cashier at the first register greeting them. This is something my boss, Chris, is very diligent about following.

I work at one of the smaller, lesser known, CVS stores located in a small shopping plaza. However, even for a store that size, there always seems to be a plethora of customers. This may be due to the fact that we are the only CVS close to the town of Croton Harmon. On the other hand, my boss likes to think it's because we have excellent, friendly, employees. Whatever the reason, my store is still a decent size for a store and a pharmacy. Unlike some other CVS stores, my store has the registers lined up right next to the entrance. This makes it easy to greet customers walking in and watch out for any customers who might walk out without paying. Next to the registers, are the computers for the photo section of our store. This is where customers can print out their photos and get helped by our photo assistants. In my store, there are exactly 21 aisles with easy to read signs that say almost exactly where everything is. Something that amazed me when I started working there is how big the storage area of the store is. I would say it is

bigger than the store itself. Thinking about it now, that does seem logical since all the overstock has to fit there. Walking into the back room requires a code so only employees can enter. When you walk into the back room, the overstock is on the left side, neatly organized by aisles and the new items are on the right side. It is placed to make working functional since there are usually many employees back there at one time. Next to the back room, there are two smaller rooms. One is used for the interviews and the other is mostly used by pharmacy employees. They are both very small, clean rooms. Even so, the break room that I enjoy the most is the one by the bathrooms. I enjoy it the most for two reasons. Partly because the bathrooms are right next to it, and because it is very quiet and peaceful. This is where all my coworkers go to unwind and relax after a long shift.

Anyone who has ever worked at a CVS store knows that customer service is the one area employees are pushed to excel in. Every aspect of the job and every position requires that the employees provide excellent customer service. This ranges from cashiers greeting customer walking through the door, to employees asking every customer in the store if they need assistance finding anything. I recall that even during orientation the manager who trained me told me that CVS employees must always be friendly because the customers are always right, even when they are wrong. I did not fully understand the importance of CVS and customer service, until I saw the online version of the CVS customer service survey. This is a survey that requires customers to enter a fifteen digit number printed on their receipt that proves they recently shopped at a CVS store. The first question asked is, “ During your most recent visit to the front part of this CVS/pharmacy store, how courteous and friendly were the sales associates? ” The choices range from 5 (very courteous and friendly), to 1 ( not at all courteous and friendly). The

next two questions ask the customer if they were offered help to find anything and if they were offered to be walked to the item(s) they were looking for. The next few questions require that the customer rate their overall experience at checkout and if they would recommend that store to a friend or family member. The questions asked on the survey did not surprise me at all, as they are exactly what I am told to do everytime I work. However, I will admit that sometimes I do get lazy on meeting those standards, but even so I always try my best to show a friendly face.

Understanding that CVS is big on customer service is easy to see when you check out the CVS job website. In the job descriptions section for retail employees, the website states that “ as a retail employee... you'll play an integral role in creating positive in-store experiences... providing friendly customer service.” Another section states that “Store Team Member position provides an opportunity... to excel in growing, high impact, customer focused role... to positively impact the lives of others.” During orientation, I was required to watch various videos that show CVS employees and store managers providing customer service and in one of the videos a line from one of the customer was that, “ customers feel welcomed and not like just another number in the store.” This line resonated with me because there are times when I walk into a big retail store and feel overwhelmed trying to find something, and in many stores like Walmart, I am never offered help by an employee. On the contrary, many cashiers do not even take the time to say hello to customers.

CVS is not the only retail store that caught on to the idea that providing great customer service can boost sales and overall customer experience. There are many other stores that are placing greater emphasis on the importance of customer service. According to a journal article by Eric R. Blume, “ more companies are turning to customer service as a means of staying

competitive in business.” His article is important because it discusses the economic advantage of stores that do provide great customer service, when compared to stores who do not. This statement is true because competing stores carry the same products, therefore stores need to find other ways to boost their sales when there is little difference in product quality and price.<sup>1</sup> This article also mentions surveys that were done by third party sources to record customer satisfaction. One of the surveys was done by Forum Corporation in which 2,374 customers from 14 organizations participated. The survey found that more than 40 percent listed poor service as the number-one reason for switching to the competition. Blume also mentions that one out of four customers will leave an organization if they are unhappy with the service provided and this hurts the organization because they lose customers and are not informed as to why the customer has left. Studies from this article support the theory that companies who provide great customer service, generate more revenue and spend less on advertising. This study proves that customer service is more important to the customer than difference in quality or price.

I think that an important part to providing exceptional customer service is the training that the employees receive. For example, when I started working at CVS there was no specific training dedicated to customer service. The training I received was dedicated to learning how to use the register and how to perform other duties around the store. I remember my boss telling me that we are expected to greet customers and be friendly at checkout, but never received training. However, my boss did frequently remind the employees to focus on the customers and made us watch videos that demonstrated other CVS employees performing great customer service. Based on the article by, George M. Piskurich, customer service can be made into a simple three-step

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<sup>1</sup> Blume, Eric R. "Customer service: giving companies the competitive edge." *Training & Development Journal*, Sept. 1988, p. 24+. Academic OneFile, [http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A6968447/AONE?u=cuny\\_ccny&sid=AONE&xid=8ce74da6](http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A6968447/AONE?u=cuny_ccny&sid=AONE&xid=8ce74da6).

process.<sup>2</sup> This process involves three crucial aspects to being good with customers. The steps are: greeting every customer every time he or she enters the store, asking every customer if he or she needs assistance every time the customer is searching for a product, and making eye contact with every customer every time they speak. Personally, I agree with his three-step process because it is what I follow at work, along with my coworkers. Something that is mentioned in the article, that I feel is usually ignored, is genuine care for the customer and not just being nice to show off to a manager. Piskurich evaluates on the importance of following up on the employee by the managers to ensure that the employee will be able to implement what they have learned in training. Piskurich mentions that managers should hold employee meetings to discuss the importance of customer service and then follow up with observation time for the employees to see if they are keeping up with the new practices. This process was very successful for Piskurich and his business as he says that, “ The number of complaints to our customer service representatives is still falling, and the number of comments from satisfied customers is up.” I feel that implementing this kind of training at my store would increase our sales and boost our customer satisfaction rating that is calculated monthly.

I think that training in every CVS store would also help with the consistency of customer service from store to store. I see the difference myself when I walk into other CVS stores near my home. I was not greeted at the two other stores I visited, nor was I offered assistance in any way. I even remember passing by a store manager several times looking for a product. This is very different compared to my store. The store manager where I work constantly asks every customer if they need help finding anything. Also, the cashier was not very friendly and did not

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<sup>2</sup> Piskurich, George M. "Service training made simple." *Training & Development*, Jan. 1991, p. 37+. Academic OneFile, <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A9786367/AONE?u=kingslrc&sid=AONE&xid=bccbbb26>.

ask me the basic question every CVS cashier knows; “How are you today?” Personally, I was not offended by this, but it was just interesting to see the difference in service.

Overall, I feel that my store has great customer service and I see it every time I go to work. Sure, every employee has off days and that is perfectly natural and understandable. However, when working for CVS, employees must be able to move past their own problems and not let personal issues affect them at work or affect the way they treat the customer.

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