

## DTD Episode 22 Show Notes

### My Bad Customer Service Experience: Could it have Been Avoided?



Recently I was at a large chain retail store with a tire center. I'll let it remain nameless. I needed two new tires before a trip so arrived by about 8:00 AM to drop off the vehicle with the simple instructions to move the front tires back and replace with two new tires. I was told the job would be complete within 45 minutes and I left to begin my day with a plan to pick it back up after some coaching calls.

Approximately 7 hours later I returned with the intent of quickly picking up the van and getting back to my day. As it sat in the parking lot I immediately noticed the state of the tires. Not new! What was up?

The employee who had checked me in that morning walked out to greet me and announced, "We weren't able to change your tires! There was corrosion blah blah blah and that would be a liability on us. We would need your permission to do the work"

"Why am I just hearing about this now", I asked?

"We aren't allowed to call our customers," he replied. "Anyway", he continued, "I told you I would be done in 45 minutes and you're just now coming back. I would have told you earlier if you had been here earlier."

All of this made no sense and according to him it was my fault that I had not been informed sooner. And, what, I was supposed to come back 45 minutes later to have the face to face conversation and then wait for the work to be done – or leave again? I didn't realize he needed me to structure my entire day around being present and available for his updates. Who knew that, in this day and age, providing a cell phone would not guarantee efficient communication to me regardless of my location! I guess this incident is still a bit close to home so my sarcasm is showing.....

Is it even worth stating that this is not the optimal way to handle this customer transaction?

In the end everything worked out fine. The Store Manager did a good job of clean up and will continue her investigation. I got a free tire and I'm pretty sure I got at least one new podcast listener out of the deal. After all, she's obviously got some drama happening!

So, they were out a tire. They have lost me as a customer for the future. And I must add that there were no other customers in this service department during the drop off or during the entire time I waited for it to be fixed during my second trip there. That should have been a cue to me!! I'm thinking service is an ongoing issue. That also means that the 3 or so employees they were paying to man the area weren't bringing in much revenue, if any. Net loss.

For this very large chain giving away a tire or paying a few employees for unproductive time is a drop in the bucket. But, in a smaller business giving away what would have otherwise been purchased or paying salaries during downtime is a much bigger deal. And in any business having to do either too often will break you.

So, why did they create this experience? Did workplace drama play a role? How could it have been avoided?

1. **There are hints that this company did not hire the right people.** The one employee, in particular, was much more interested in creating down time for himself and blaming me for not waiting than in providing good service. Someone missed the boat during his interview process. Hire for personality not just skills! You can't teach someone to care about your customers if they are focused on getting out of work. Ask candidates to share examples of a time when they went above and beyond for a customer in the past. They should have some good stories and look for their eyes to light up!
2. **These employees had not been encouraged to be resourceful.** One employee made the decision to set a car aside rather than do the work and made the unilateral decision NOT to call me. Why didn't anyone else take initiative to ask about the lone car sitting in front of the empty service garage? Why did no one investigate the situation and call? It certainly wasn't because they were busy! A resourceful team would have asked more questions and applied some logic. Someone would have called me to ask whether I'd give the go ahead to change the tires. Teach your team to think creatively and problem solve individually or together. Make sure that employees and leaders alike are charged with solving problems.
3. **There was no focus on great customer service.** It was not about completing a job well and delighting me, their customer. They had been allowed to provide sub-standard service and the empty service bays were the just reward. Leaders, create a focus on great service. Make sure every team member knows the importance of jumping in to help a customer. Make top notch service a priority by speaking about it often. Don't tolerate anything less. Celebrate successes and brainstorm ways to improve always.