

# Providing the Best Customer Service



**HERE IS ONE THING** you can never forget in this business: the customer can buy the product from anyone. You are not selling the quality of the product. You are selling your service. Clients want to know they will receive the best possible service from you. Or they will get it else-

where. It's as simple as that," says Terri Voelkel, Group Human Resources Manager for xpedx, a division of International Paper and one of the leading distributors for printing paper, packaging products, facility supplies, and graphic imaging pre-press equipment and supplies.

"To the extent that we provide the best customer service, we distinguish ourselves," Voelkel adds. "For us, every position is important when it comes to providing the best possible service. So long as our people are very good at what they do, and they convey that they care, our customers will stay with us."

How can you tell if someone you are considering bringing on board has what it takes to please and come through for your clients and prospects?

What you need to know is whether they can turn a problem into an opportunity. Are they outgoing and friendly? Will they be able to smooth things over, or will they ruffle feathers? Are they intrigued by solving problems? Do they get a genuine sense of fulfillment out of helping others?

Providing the best possible customer service, after all, has more to do with an individual's personality than anything else.

In fact, Caliper's studies show that if an individual has the right personality, they can easily learn the technical aspects of a job. But it doesn't play the other way.

Try as we might, we cannot give someone a more service-oriented personality. People either have the characteristics needed to come through for customers-or

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE IS KEY TO OUR COMPANY'S SUCCESS.**

### **WHAT MAKES OUR CLIENTS STAY WITH US IS OUR SERVICE.**

they do not.

So, just what are the qualities that distinguish employees who provide excellent customer service? The best certainly solve problems with confidence, ease and speed. On the other hand, the worst have an uncanny ability to blow problems out of all proportion. And then there are all those in between.

Still, in most cases, it's not what an employee does, but how it is done that can either leave your customers coming back for more... or drive them to your competitors.

And that is precisely why it is so difficult to tell during a hiring interview whether someone's favorable first impression will wear well or wear off.

People who are customer-service oriented possess a combination of seven innate personality qualities. They are: conscientious, helpful, secure, open, outgoing, adept at solving problems and fundamentally motivated to come through for others. That's no small order. And you can't give anybody these qualities. They are built in. Or they are not.

Before hiring your next employee, pause and think about how often this new individual will be relating with your prospects or customers. Do they convey the feeling that you would want a prospect to experience? Will they be able to calm down a distraught customer? In either situation, their performance will reflect directly upon what people think of your firm. Remember, first impressions often become lasting. ■