

Are customers taking a swing at you?

Instead of punching back, you may need to rethink how you run your business

All of us have encountered unhappy customers from time to time. Some of us can recover quickly and some seem to make it worse. I was listening to Coach Geoff Berman tell a story he learned from his kids that usually works for anyone.

Geoff began the story by saying: I bet you remember as a kid playing the “Punch Buggy” game. How awesome was that for Volkswagen’s marketing! I’ll save that for another article. For this one I want you to think about what the “Punch Buggy” game was really about, and how it relates to customer service. “Punch Buggy” relates to customer service? Really, Geoff? Are you kidding me? Bear with me and I promise I’ll get you there.

So let’s look at what the kids are really doing with the “Punch Buggy” game. This game gave me a legitimate reason to punch my sister and it was OK. How cool is that! If I didn’t hit her too hard, it probably went undetected by my parents. It didn’t take her long to figure out she can punch back, and she did. That is

when I learned to add “No punch backs!”

No punch backs

Now I want you to think about your customers and the service you provide. Don’t we play the “Punch Buggy” game with them? Here’s an example. Let’s say a first-time customer comes in and you quote her a price on brakes that she feels is more than she should pay. You came very highly recommended so

HOW DO YOU TURN PUNCHES INTO KISSES? WHEN YOUR CUSTOMER SWINGS AT YOU, DON’T SWING BACK. KISS THEM.

she decided she could trust you and let you do the job. After she got the vehicle back, whatever the original problem was (squeak, grind, pull, whatever), it’s still there. What is she going to do? She is going to “punch.” “I spent \$450 on my brakes, and it is still doing the same thing

I brought it in for. I knew I should have taken it somewhere else. That’s the last time I let John give me any auto advice.” So now it’s your turn. What are you going to do? I’m guessing you didn’t hear the customer say “no punch backs” so that is exactly what you do. “Can you bring it back so we can take a look at it?” Is that what they really want? To be inconvenienced and bring the car back to you only to hear you say it will be another \$200 to really fix the problem?

Now I have to tell you that I am the luckiest man on earth because I married the most incredible woman in the world. She has made it her life’s mission to be the best mom she can be. There is no question that has rubbed off, and it has helped to make me a much better father than I ever thought I could be. She has always hated the “Punch Buggy” game. It promotes the kids hitting each other. Me, I’m the dad. This is fun. Until someone gets hurt and I get a lecture. So one day she decides to play along and see if she can fix the game. She tells us that instead of a “Punch Buggy,” what if you try a “Kiss Buggy” instead? My seven-year-old loved the idea and, seeing where my wife was going with this, I decided to play along. The next thing that happened absolutely blew me away. As soon as my daughter saw a “Kiss Buggy” she said “Kiss Buggy. No kiss backs!” When she realized what she had said, she immediately took it back and said “I mean Kiss Buggy. Kiss back!” No more punching. Everyone got in on this and it became a really fun game where we were sharing love with each other and

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Chris “Chubby” Frederick, CEO

not violence. One kiss was never enough and boy did I love finding a “kiss buggy.”

Turning punches into kisses

So now I ask you, how do you turn punches into kisses? When your customer swings at you, don’t swing back. Kiss them. If you fight back with kisses, they will start kissing back. Let me demonstrate. The situation is the same. The customer is upset because the car is doing the same thing it did before you fixed it. Your previous response did not focus on the customer, it focused on the car. “Can you bring it back so we can take a look at it?” What you need to do is respond to the emotions she is feeling and just let her know you understand and that you care.

This can be easily accomplished by remembering four very simple things: thank them, empathize, apologize or agree. We’ll get to the car, but not until we make them feel better. She feels violated, and we must fix this first. A better response might be “I am horrified that this has happened. I can’t imagine how you must feel. This is very unusual, and we take these things very seriously. Thank you so much for taking the time to bring this to my attention. Can you tell me where the car is so we can come and get it?”

Now I want you to take a minute and be that customer. In the first scenario, you put the burden on her. In the second scenario, you showed empathy and you thanked her. You put the responsibility on yourself. Which one makes you feel better? Isn’t that what you really want? Someone to listen and make you feel better. Of course you do. We are all consumers and have had this happen to us. Our doctor sent us to a specialist and the referral wasn’t there. No one told you you needed a referral and were unwilling to help. Now it’s your problem. Ever upgrade your cell phone only to find out they changed your service without telling you and then told you you should have known that. “This happens with all upgrades,” they tell you.

Why would you know this? If they had just taken responsibility and showed a bit of concern, you would have been fine. “I’m so sorry that happened. I know how frustrating this must be for you. Unfortunately, this does happen from time to time. The good news is it only takes a few minutes for me to fix that for you. Do you have a few minutes right now or can I call you at a more convenient time?” If businesses responded in a similar way (addressing your needs first or in other words, giving you a kiss) wouldn’t it be very hard for you to keep punching?

Can you change?

This technique requires you to make a mental change in how you think of your shop and your customers. You may need to rethink how you handle a lot of things that happen in the shop. If you’re curious about how well you or your associate can handle a change like this, download our Ability to Change Assessment Form, available for a limited time at www.atonlinetraining.com/2017-09. It will let you know how open you are to change and what types of change. It’s a great place to start moving in new directions, just like how you react to customers.

Start practicing how you respond to your customer using these four principles. It doesn’t matter if they are new to your business or have been a customer for 30 years, if they are male or female. Everyone wants to feel wanted, appreciated and heard. If you always remember to respond with a kiss, everyone will want to come to your shop. **TL**



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across North America to drive profits and dreams home to their families. This month’s article was written with the help of Coach Geoff Berman. chubby@autotraining.net

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