This page was exported from - Shelburne Free Press
Export date: Fri Oct 30 5:50:35 2026 / +0000 GMT

Customer service

by BRIAN LOCKHART

If you have ever received bad customer service in a store, business, or any organization, you will probably remember it.

Customer service has a huge impact on everyone and affects a person's decision to return to a place of business, find somewhere else to shop, or even how they treat employees when they return to a service-type establishment.

A few years ago, I was at an event in a rural area of Dufferin County.

At the end of the event, as everyone was returning to their cars, one woman was walking around and greeting people. I had no idea who she was.

She came up to me with a big smile on her face and introduced herself as the NDP candidate in the upcoming federal election for that riding.

I was pleasant, said it was nice to meet her, shook her hand, then explained that I actually lived in another riding.

Her smile disappeared, she gave me a look of disgust, dismissed me with a wave of her hand, and said, ?Then go vote there,? before turning her back on me and walking away.

It doesn't take a political assistant or advisor to know the proper thing to say, which would have been something like ?Well, I hope you consider voting NDP where you live.?

Instead, this nasty woman just left a bad impression of both herself and her political party.

No, she didn't win the election.

When I was first looking for a house to buy where I now live, I saw a ?for sale' sign in front of a property that looked pretty nice. I wrote down the name of the real estate company and the name of the realtor on the sign.

The next day, I called him to inquire about the home.

When I mentioned the property address, the realtor said, in a mocking tone, ?Are you kidding? I sold that place the day after it went on the market.?

He then went on to imply that, apparently, I wasn't too knowledgeable about the local market, again in a mocking tone.

When I hung up the phone, the only thing I thought was, ?This guy must be the stupidest real estate guy in the world.?

It was obvious I was looking for property.

If he had any brains at all, he should have explained that this property was sold; however, he had other listings he could show me and should have asked what I was looking for.

Instead, he lost a potential customer, a potential sale, and the chance that I would refer him to anyone else I knew who was looking to buy a home.

There used to be a small, old-school gas station where I live that was run-down. It went through several owners over the years.

It was the type of station where they pumped the gas for you.

It was bought by a new guy with a surly attitude. I don't understand why such an angry, rude guy would place himself in a customer service environment.

Once, when buying gas, I told him what I wanted, and he tried reaching through the car window to snatch the bills out of my hand while I was still taking them from my wallet, before he even pumped the gas.

I instinctively pulled back, reacting with a degree of alarm.

His response was a surly, ?Next time you come here, you pay before you get the gas.?

I believe my response was an expletive directed right at him, and me telling him there won't be a next time because the ESSO down the street provided better service.

Sure enough, within a couple of months, he was out of business, and the gas station was sold, again.

So many people had a bad experience just buying gas there; no one in town would patronize that station.

On the flip side, there is a local furniture and appliance store in town that also has another store selling mattresses.

I needed a new mattress and went in to speak to the salesperson. She was friendly, knowledgeable, and did not try to put any pressure on me to buy a more expensive mattress.

When they delivered my new mattress, a woman with a clipboard was riding along with the delivery crew. I guess she was just monitoring deliveries.

As I was speaking to her in the driveway, the delivery team removed the old mattress and had the new one in place in only a few minutes. It was fast, friendly, and very convenient.

I was also in the market for new appliances, so I decided to try their appliance store.

I spoke to the salesperson. He asked me what exactly I was looking for.

He showed me a few models in the price range and size I needed. Again, no pressure, no double talk, just an honest approach to selling me what I needed.

Guess where I am buying several thousand dollars' worth of new appliances?

Customers are what keep a business running.

It only makes sense to treat your customers with dignity and honesty and provide a pleasant experience.