

Demand More Customer Service

For yourself and for your organization



by Linda George, President, Crawford Associates, Inc.

My last article, published in the July/August 2006 issue of Resort Trades, Management and Operations magazine, was fun to write and rewarding. Many hours were spent reflecting on "My Personal Journey" and all the individuals who have touched my life, especially the friends I have made in the timeshare industry. For those who missed it, the article is posted on our web site under Articles at www.cairesortservices.com and at www.resorttrades.com.

Today my subject is Customer Service or I should say - the lack thereof! A majority of businesses have resorted to automated telephone answering systems with voice mail, or you push five different response numbers, enter your account number then hold - it seems forever! Understanding this automation is often used to improve business profits, not provide customer service is where the

difference lies. If ever in doubt, just try calling the sales department instead of customer service and see how quickly you reach a representative. (Gosh, did I reach the wrong department...would you please transfer me to a customer service representative...works great!)

Customer Service is something I demand for myself at every opportunity, the company that personally answers the telephone will get my business every time. When a company recording says all agents are busy, that usually means their staff is limited and they are more interested in their bottom line than customer service. Each service provider, from my bank to my hairdresser, appreciates my business and their personal customer service allows me to get the answers or appointments I need with one telephone call and that just makes life easier.

Then there are companies who rely on telephones for a large part of their services, like collection agencies. Some of these agencies routinely send all incoming calls to voice mail while their collection

staff is leaving more telephone messages requesting a call back. This system works and is profitable based on volume not customer service. Many types of debt collections such as credit card or department store accounts may require such automation to support the sheer volume nationwide yet many vacation resorts are forced to accept that same system.

Resort owners are special individuals, even those delinquent in paying their account are valuable to the ownership base at a successful property. Keeping these owners active in their resort and current with their account can be achieved with knowledgeable and professional collectors. To excel in customer service, an agency must represent the best interest of the resort, educate the delinquent owner on the rules and regulations of the resort and re-sell the owner on the benefits of their resort purchase. Vacation resorts should demand the courtesy, respect and appreciation for their owners and staff that a voice mail service cannot provide.

Options are available when contracting with a collection agency for a resort property, and considerations for customer service must be included along with the services provided, invoice methods and collection rates. Evaluate each agency by contacting their customer service number, leave a message and note the response time. Avoid the

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agencies requiring multiple messages to ensure a smooth flow of information at the time it is needed.

Our workdays are filled with telephone messages and waiting for a return call to get required information. Our desks become stacked with paperwork waiting to be resolved and that call back will always come while we are tending to other concerns, further delaying completion of a file and requiring another telephone call. Clearly then, voice mail messages are adding to our busy workday rather than providing relief expected from service providers.

Service providers who rely on voice mail as a constant source of communication does not respect their client or appreciate their business. Such lack of service is unacceptable when the client pays or provides a source of revenue, and voice mail only benefits the service provider. Demand more from customer service for yourself and for your resort organization, seize every opportunity to eliminate the waiting, avoid the hassles and reduce the stress in your day.

Each effort in securing greater customer service has a cumulative effect resulting in a noticeable improvement to productivity and a greater sense of quality to life, both at work and at home.

COLLECTIONS, BILLING & RECEIVABLES

It's not too late! Our timeshare collection specialists can still reduce the number of unpaid accounts for maintenance fee and tax assessments. Don't wait, if your annual budget needs help, *call now!*

Contact Aaron Diller at 800-566-8757
or visit our website at www.cairesortservices.com