

## Where's My Cookie?

Recently, I had a business lunch meeting at a restaurant that I frequently visit. The food is normally good and the service is equally as good. My lunch partner had been to the same restaurant with me before. We choose this restaurant because we were very satisfied with our past experiences. The wait staff fills up your water promptly, brings you unlimited coffee and replenishes the breadbasket as soon as they see it empty. During lunch, we had a great business discussion but were interrupted with something that most people would consider silly. We ordered coffees and with the coffees the restaurant generally serves a small cookie as a nice gesture.

Everything was great until I asked the waiter for another cookie. The waiter looked at me and at my lunch partner and said sorry gentlemen, the restaurant has a policy of only providing one cookie per customer. I looked up at the waiter and said with a smile that I understand the policy of providing one cookie per customer but that it didn't make sense to me that we could receive unlimited coffee, unlimited bread, free refills on soft drinks but could not get another cookie.

Now just for your understanding, this cookie is not a giant cookie, but the size of your fingertip. The waiter said to us that he would have to ask management to see if he could do this, otherwise he would have to charge an extra dollar per cookie. He came back and said that it would be a dollar more per cookie. He did not just come back with a serious face but smiled at us realizing how silly this matter was. I explained to him that it's not about the extra dollar, but that it did not make sense to me that the restaurant would be so forthcoming with everything except the cookie. When he left the table I told my lunch partner that this is a very interesting lesson in what most businesses don't understand. It is about the most important aspect of any successful business and is called in the industry **CRM (Customer Relationship Management)**.

Most businesses pride themselves on strong and good service. What they fail to deal with is the sour taste that they may leave in the customer's mouths by not providing them "the cookie". Clearly that sweet taste of the cookie with my coffee would have made that restaurant experience more positively memorable. Businesses need to remember that it is not just what they say or what they do but how they are remembered in the customers' eyes. Clearly, it is not about a cookie but on what would be remembered by us regardless of all the good service and great food. Most companies that value themselves in providing exemplary service never understand that a bad experience of not meeting their customers' specific needs, no matter how small and inconsequential to the main service or product they are providing, can create an environment which breeds negative thoughts and bad memories so that they do not come back.

In our little story, when the waiter came back to fill up my cup of coffee for the third time he brought me the extra cookie and smiled and walked away. My lunch partner was surprised by this whole incident as he had now seen first hand how a business, no matter how strong, was not dealing with the pleasure points that a customer had and was amazed to see what I saw from a business point of view. So next time you deal with a customer make sure you are positively remembered because not only will that person hopefully recommend you but will come back again. This will only happen if the person leaves with a sweet taste.