

PROPOSAL FOR RETAIL STORE BEST BUY ON CUSTOMER SERVICE ETIQUETTE

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Brian Dunn
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Dear Brian Dunn,

I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself to you and make you a business proposition that would enhance Best Buy's customer service and support. I am aware of the negative publicity the store has received through various complaints by consumers on websites such as rip-off report and numerous blogs. I have an extensive background working with multiple companies improving their issues with customer service etiquette. I believe that I can help. The proposal consists of sending in a group of skilled professionals that work heavily to improve people skills of all magnitudes. Our training consists of educating employees on techniques such as body language, verbal communication and feedback. We also introduce scenarios on how to deal with difficult customers, becoming an active listener and ways to show empathy.

I would like a chance to meet with you and your staff to see where their expertise in customer service lies so that we may help them improve.

I have included my proposal for your review and hope that we can work together.

Sincerely yours,

Neysa Greer

Neysa Greer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROPOSAL FOR RETAIL STORE BEST BUY ON CUSTOMER SERVICE ETIQUETTE

Neysa Greer
July 31, 2011—

Best Buy has been around since the early 1900s. Being the largest retail store in North America, it is known for its electronics including cellular phones, televisions and computers. For several years, various complaints on rip-off report.com and other media sites have swarmed the World Wide Web notifying everyone who crosses its path how poor Best Buy's customer service is.

This proposal is a communication plan projected to improve Best Buy's customer service etiquette to over 180,000 of its employees, and regain consumer loyalty. The entirety of the investigation consists of reviewing consumer complaints against Best Buy and finding ways to improve. This plan begins with the help of skilled personnel working with staff over a 12-week period to strengthen their problem solving and people skills. Next is how to be an active listener, verbal communicator, and ways to show empathy. The training consists of interactive seminars, role playing, body language analysis, and response mechanism.

Over a 12 month period, this training is introduced to staff at the beginning of the present calendar year and again mid-year. A Nielsen Rating service is used to compare results. Web tracking services are also used to determine what items consumers purchase over others and if the message of revision made by Best Buy is received by its customers along with the general population.

Follow up meetings post-training occur to verify the deadlines set are maintainable and continuous. This time is used to answer employee questions and a way to confirm retention of material with proper implementation. Feedback from surveys supplied to customers and at posted locations is reviewed to determine if improvements through the training process are being made.

Best Buy has continued to supply products that sell and increase store openings. The implementation of this plan will ensure customer service expectations are exceeded.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose of Proposal	1
Background	1
Situation Analysis	2
Difficulties and Related Problems	2
ACTION PLAN	3
Goal and Objective	3
S.W.O.T Analysis	3
CORE PROBLEM AND OPPORTUNITY	4
KEY PUBLICS	4
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY MESSAGES	5
STRATEGIES AND TACTICS	5
Segmented Targets	7
TIME TASK MATRIX	8
EVALUATION CRITERIA AND TOOLS	9
Effectiveness Measurements	10
SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	10

EVALUATION OF CUSTOMER SERVICE ETIQUETTE

FOR RETAIL STORE BEST BUY

Neysa Greer

INTRODUCTION

Best Buy is the largest retail store in North America of consumer electronics, entertainment software and appliances. In 2010 Best Buy's total revenue was 49,694 and in 2011, 50,272. Best Buy has expanded outside the U.S to countries including Turkey and Canada. Best Buy employs over 180,000 employees nationwide. With over 1,150 stores in the United States, Puerto Rico and China, Best Buy stores are in close reach to satisfy your electronic needs. Supplying paraphernalia such as music and video games, Best Buy services the needs of the youth and the kid in us.

PURPOSE OF PROPOSAL

To help ensure Best Buy customers are satisfied with the products and services it supplies, a strategy followed by numerous tactics are comprised into 12-weeks of training with the company's staff. This training makes up the building blocks that comprise the company's approach to customer service etiquette. In order to be the best you have to operate to standards the consumer can appreciate.

BACKGROUND

Best Buy is the largest electronic retailer of cellular phones supplied by vendors known as Verizon Wireless, AT&T Wireless, Sprint PCS, and T-Mobile (Telegraph Media, 2011). They also sell items such as DVD players, music, computer software, car stereos, video cameras, video games and home appliances such as washers and dryers. Its subsidiaries include Geek Squad, Cinema Now and Pacific Sales. More than 1,150 stores operate in the United States, Puerto Rico, Canada, Mexico, Turkey and China. Best Buy's products are mostly purchased in-store or online. They have now expanded the consumer's option to buy with installing an Express Zoom shop at stores in shopping malls and airports, carrying a subset of products sold at general stores. Atlanta International's Hartsfield-Jackson airport is one of 13 locations to carry this service (Lowe, 2008).

Founded in St Paul, Minnesota in 1966 by Richard M. Schulze and James Wheeler, Best Buy was originally known as the Sound of Music. On June 14, 1981 a tornado hit the Roseville, Minnesota store. As a way to rid of inventory, Sound of Music promoted a sale and called it a "Best Buy" becoming an annual event. The name stuck. The store was rebranded as Best Buy in 1983 with a flagship store in Burnsville, Minnesota (Telegraph Media, 2011). In 1992 Best Buy hit the \$1 billion mark in annual revenues and by 1993 became USA's second-largest consumer electronics retailer. The company partnered with Microsoft in 1999 boosting the company's profile, leading to the first global sourcing office in Shanghai, China in 2003. Best Buy has had issues in the past with their products and service including the Product Replacement Plan. In recent months, Best Buy has undergone several changes but still have a few issues that need to be addressed including its customer service.

FINDINGS

SITUATION ANALYSIS

In 2008, Best Buy opened its 1,000th physical store on October 24th. In 2009, Best Buy Canada partnered with The Carphone Warehouse and opened a Best Buy mobile store housed inside all Best Buy locations. During the same year, the store had a facelift changing the font to the one used the previous year. In 2010 Best Buy opened its first store in the UK with intentions of opening another 200 stores there in the near future. Although Best Buy has several store openings, how are they doing overall? In 2011, Best Buy generated profit of \$651 million on revenue of \$16.26 billion, this was a decrease compared to the numbers in 2010; where it tallied \$16.55 billion in revenue and \$779 million in profit (Wiki, 2011). Best Buy has recently discussed taking on a new venture, to sell an electric car. According to Automotive News, while consumers are shopping for their electronic needs Best Buy would promote and sell the car. The company's chain already sells electronic motorcycles, and plans to work with electric car start up companies to implement this project (Guilford, 2011).

Outside of its economic wavering, Best Buy struggles to deal with the conditions of the company's return policy and the ability to handle customer complaints. These complaints are coming in from multiples cities and all with the same issue, poor customer service. Customers have gone to great lengths to show the company how they feel about the poor customer support they receive for product returns. This issue has been escalated to the CEO but little is being done to repair the problem. Consumers start out with a call to the store to see what can be done about the defective item. Upon arrival they are faced with bad attitudes and uncaring responses.

DIFFICULTIES AND RELATED PROBLEMS

Various complaints that swarm the World Wide Web include:

Situation: A computer monitor is returned within the 30 day return policy period. The customer was told to buy another computer and fix the old one. Geek squad confirmed monitor defective. The request for an exchange was denied. Owner paid to fix computer out-of-pocket.

Situation: Customer contacted the store to speak with someone in car audio. The phone rang continuously without an answer for over 50 minutes. Customer taped the entire event while driving to that particular Best Buy store. The store manager did not have a reason for why the phone was not answered nor was the escalated issue resolved by corporate.

Situation: Best Buy charged customer for late fee on credit account after a payment was made the day before. Owner was advised to make future payments a week or two before the due date to allow for proper processing time and the charging of late fees.

Situation: Customer purchases a gift card in the amount of \$200. Customer lost card. Arrived onsite to expedite issue and waited in line for 10 minutes to speak with cashier. Cashier told customer they could not help them and to directed them to customer service, waiting in line for approximately 20 minutes. Customer

service advises to speak with a manager, waiting another 20 minutes. Manager advised customer to contact American Express and then call corporate best buy to have another card mailed.

Situation: Customer had broken television. Customer called Best Buy extended warranty that set an appointment for a service technician to come out. After review and arrival, service tech advised customer would receive a status call within a few days. Customer finally received an automatic update three weeks later with approval to fix. The same technician came out to fix television and after reviewing the TV the second time, denied the repair on the spot to his manager over the phone.

CORE PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY

Best Buy has poor customer service world wide. This growing issue can eventually come to the demise of Best Buy if continuously neglected. Without company loyalty, people will shop elsewhere and Best Buy will be out of business.

ACTION PLANNING

GOAL

To improve customer service and support, among employees at all levels of the company including corporate, without affecting the company's profit share.

OBJECTIVES

- Increase employee awareness on customer service techniques by 80%
- Improve people skills
- Regain consumer trust
- Obtain positive results

SWOT ANALYSIS

Best Buy has multiple strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats the company is faced with.

Strength

- There is a wide product variety with services including Geek Squad to assist with electronic issues. They also have the Recycling Program for used video games.
- Powerful scaling capability. The company's growth pattern continues to increase.
- Strong Market Share. Best Buy is one of the largest retailers in the world.
- Geographic location. Best Buy stores are numerous in count located in not only the U.S but Mexico, Turkey and even the U.K.
- Competitive advantage. The company was named in magazines such as Forbes, and Fortune for being the most admired company in 2006.

- Distribution/Awareness. Best Buy utilizes its resources to spread the word to consumers about its growing inventory plus sale items.

Opportunities

- Eliminate losses/Product Replacement Plan
- New inventions/Electric car
- New market/Exclusive brands
- Monthly Customer Service training
- Their commitment to provide customer satisfaction is definitely lacking when it comes to the handling of issues surrounding their products and services.

Weaknesses

- Poor Customer Service
- Poor reputation
- Long wait times for service
- Poor management
- Poor phone coverage/No answer on first ring

Threats

- Failure to act may result in company demise
- Local competitors
- Economy
- New technologies

KEY PUBLICS

The key public/target market: all employees in the company including corporate

Demographics: Male and female, multi-racial, various economic backgrounds, minimal education is high school graduate. These are corporate employees, managers, cashiers, customer service representatives, geek squad, receptionists, floaters, and guest services employees.

Motivating self-interests: Professional reputation, financial success

Status of current relationship: Best Buy still remains competitive amongst its competitors given its current reputation. February 15, 2009 Best Buy started an electronics recycling program. In late August 2010, they launched video game trade-ins buying used video games just like GameStop. This service is located in over 600 stores in the U.S. (Wiki, 2011).

Third party influences: The use of YouTube is one of the influencers used to draw the public back in, notifying them of the changes made to the company's customer service and support. Another method to ensure efficiency is the assistance of management. Use of the company websites comments and suggestions slot will allow others to read the experiences consumers have undergone post training.

What objective each public will help you accomplish: All employees that undergo training will utilize what they learn to accomplish a common goal, to improve customer service and support.

MESSAGES

PRIMARY MESSAGES

"Here are our employees, and we're proud of them. We don't need models or actors to help us connect with you, our customers. That's not genuine. These are real people who can really help you. We care about them and we care about you" (Day, 2011).

SECONDARY MESSAGES

Best Buy is dedicated to making improvements by any means necessary; help us in giving them the feedback they need to help you.

Best Buy has a diverse culture of employees here to help you with your purchasing needs.

STRATEGY/TACTICS

The best strategy for this campaign is to increase employee awareness. This approach will ensure that staff upholds the company's core competencies. The values that Best Buy follows are customer focus first, integrity, trust and ethics second and self knowledge third. Its key motivators are to build effective teams, develop direct reports, listening, managing diversity and motivating others.

"Workplace communication" is the best primary channel to deliver clear and consistent messages about customer service complaints, and how they should be addressed. Alternative channels such as social media or mass media would not be effective in a situation such as this. The problem is internal to the organization and the people to be reached are the staff.

The primary tactics for the 12-week platform used to introduce the customer service techniques to employees include:

1. One week to monitor employee performance
2. Four weeks people skills training
3. Four weeks interactive seminar
4. Four weeks customer service and support training
5. Weekly follow up meetings post training

6. Install feedback/suggestion box in all locations including mobile stations
7. Add "comments/concerns" tab to current website (viewed by staff only)
8. Additional Training

1. Monitor Performance. This is the initial week training begins. Close monitoring of employee performance is completed. In order to find out the weaknesses of each employee, this is a critical piece of the training process.

2. People Skills Training. The use of this resource is to get back to the basics. During this time, facilitators provide packets of suggested responses that can be used as a tool on what to say when dealing with difficult customers in various situations. They practice how to be an active listener and show empathy. Employees get an attitude adjustment, and learn to communicate clearly.

3. Interactive Seminar. This tool will be utilized to find out each employees level of interpersonal skill and conflict resolution. Employees will be discussing day-to-day situations and how they were handled. Employees are encouraged to provide feedback with solutions. Solutions provided in training will be comprised in a packet and passed out at the end of the course for employee reference.

4. Customer Service and Support Training. This training is a lecture style teaching. It allows for minimal interaction (role play) and is set to teach employees the positives and negatives of body language. Discussions on facial expression or gesture reflect the impression left by consumers as a sign of annoyance, inconsideration to their needs or rudeness. This training also explores how to maintain composure and the procedure to take when a customer raises their voice or makes personal threats. It also discusses how to approach a customer and what to say. During the sixth week, a mid-training review will determine how much information each employee has retained and how much they are able to apply up to this point is evaluated. To wrap up, the class will be advised how to properly use humor and how to maintain composure.

5. Weekly Follow Up Meetings. These meetings give employees a chance to discuss the obstacles they are faced with the week before and how they handled it. The purpose behind this is, to seek solutions from not only communication leaders but other staff on the best practices for handling each situation. An informal exam is given in the third week of training and reviewed by leaders to see how the information is being perceived and retained. Based on the results, training could continue for another week.

6. Feedback Post/ Suggestion Box. A box for comments would be placed at a specific location in the store. Surveys are handed out by employees at the entrance and exit to give the store immediate results. Many consumers deal with customer service issues while shopping. After leaving the store they go home and get online to vent or just decide not to return. If customers see this item in stores, it is likely that they will participate knowing their concerns will be heard and changes could be made. The comment box will be cleaned out three times a day by a member of staff hired to specifically review and respond as needed, or be escalated to management.

7. Complaint Tab on Website. A spot on the website is added to allow customers to share their experiences. All comments will be date and time stamped to ensure accuracy. The site will be checked three times a day by a member of staff hired to specifically review and respond as needed, or to escalate

the problem to management. Staff will also review social media sites to see what is being said in the media about Best Buy.

8. Additional Training. In retail turnover is high, new employees are hired, dismissed, promoted or quit at a rapid rate. Having these trainings offered twice a year will help ensure employee competence and keep employees up to date on the company's norms and values.

SEGMENTED TARGETS

The key public/segmented target market outside of the primary is the consumer. This segmented group works in departments such as car audio, home appliances, TV's, cameras, electronics, and computers. The shifts of employment are full-time, part-time, temporary, seasonal, and interns.

The best channel to reach the public about these enhancements is social media. The alternative channel to reach publics is traditional mass media. Because people are always on the go and with new technology, many important messages now come across airways. Many people like to use the internet to communicate or to keep up to date with current affairs. Some pick up the local newspaper. Now messages can be viewed on your cell phone with a click of a button.

TACTICS FOR SEGMENTED MARKETS

The tactics used to reach segmented markets outside of primary key publics include:

1. Social Media sites (YouTube, Facebook, Cell phone alerts)
2. Traditional Mass Media (Newspapers, Radio)

1. YouTube/Facebook/Cell phone alerts. YouTube can be used to run recorded commercials. Thousands of people get on YouTube to watch the latest videos, commercials, and other such media. It is a back up to live television. Best Buy's commercial will disclose how they have changed the way they do business. Specifically, their customer service etiquette. Facebook is a way people discuss with their friends their experiences. Best Buy will have a Facebook page set up. Cell phone alerts are the quickest way to get a message out to consumers. "Push a deal" is the name of the service offered to consumers with the help of cellular phone vendors Sprint PCS, Verizon, T-Mobile, AT&T. Alerts will be sent to the owner's cell phone whenever they pass a Best Buy store, an ad with current sales items will pop-up on their phone including the mission statement. The alerts are OPT out optional for consumers who do not want this additional service (Push A Deal, 2011).

2. Newspaper/Radio. Best Buy will purchase an ad in the newspaper to catch people's attention. The ad would say something like "Come shop at Best Buy where we treat you right" or "Our formula is simple: we're a growth company focused on better solving the unmet needs of our customers—and we rely on our employees to solve those puzzles. Thanks for stopping." (Best Buy, 2011). The company will purchase a 30 second slot on the radio to also promote the changes made.

TIME TASK MATRIX

The calendar breaks down eight individual tactics based off the strategy to increase customer service etiquette over a 12-week interval. These are itemized by hours per day and on a weekly basis. Facilitators have been assigned to ensure the program is implemented gradually, and the learning dictated throughout.

1. People skills. Introduction to class. Employees' will introduce themselves to the group. The program starts with the introduction of people skills and attitude adjustments. The facilitator will go over ways to show empathy, becoming an active listener and great communicator. Duration: two hours per day through weeks 1-6.

2. Interactive seminar. Employees are split up in groups by favorite color to make the project exciting. The facilitator assigned will pass out a scenario/solution match cards and at the end the class will regroup to compare and contrast answers. Suggestion and questions allowed. The duration is two hours per day in weeks 1-2, 6-7 and 11-12 over the 12-weeks. Duration: three and a half hours per given day.

3. Customer service and support. Week 1-2, 5-6, 9-10 and week 12 employees are introduced to the world of difficult customers. In week 5-8, intro to body language and participate in role playing. Facial expression quiz given. Week 6-12 mid-training review. Duration: three and a half hours per given day.

4. Follow up. Meetings begin to retrieve what employees have learned and answer questions they may have. This will continue post training. In weeks 3, 6, 9 and 12 employees are given retention quizzes.

5. Feedback/Suggestion box. Three employees will review the comments from the boxes installed in all locations including mobile stations during entire training and thereafter. Duration: four hours per given day.

6. Complaints. Three employees will review comments on social media sites, and the Best Buy's website to see if they can assist customers or escalate issue to management. Occur during entire training and thereafter. Duration: four hours per given day.

7. Added Training. Statistics are reviewed pre training and post training to see if there is an improvement. This is completed twice a year to ensure the company maintains performance and upholds the company values.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND EVALUATION TOOLS

The evaluation criterion is based on the 12-week tactical platform created for the primary targets, the “employees”. At this stage of the plan we have embarked on the accomplishments of the objectives set previously to:

Increase employee awareness on customer service techniques from 50% to 80% by the third week of training.

Evaluation Tool: the evaluation criteria and tools show how we plan to stay on task and also to ensure employees do their part to enhance the company but first they need to know where they started out, for customer service, scores were at 50% the goal is to increase it to 80, a test will be given mid way through training, and results are reviewed and compared.

Improve people skills by the 3rd week of training.

Evaluation Tool: Distribute surveys to customers entering and leaving the store to get a read on how they feel about the company policies and customer service provided to them since the revisions. Directing consumers back to the Best Buy website where they can share their experiences on the tab supplied, the response will be collected by staff and used for evaluation.

Obtain consumer trust within six months post training

Evaluation Tool: The ways to build the customers trust is through integrity, doing what we say we will do. A consumer dislikes nothing worse then being told one thing and never seeing follow through. Another is making sure the prices in the stores are the same as advertised. In addition to feedback card and website link, at time of check out cashiers can briefly explain the return policy and where to provide feedback of their experience. Consumers are sure to return if they feel respected and a valued customer.

See positive results within the eight month post training

Evaluation Tool: Tracking productivity six months before revisions to six months post revisions. Web tracking is a useful service that can track the number of hits on Best Buy. It allows us to review what areas people looked at the most, and which products were purchased over others.

EFFECTIVENESS MEASUREMENT

Hire a rating service such as Nielsen rating or other broadcast monitoring service. These ratings let you know how many people are being reached with your program or video released on YouTube.

Comments and feedback cards from the box posted at locations are a good way to retrieve responses on how the company is doing and if there are still areas for improvement per the consumers. It is also an option to seek out an opportunity for a new product based on what the consumer would like to see added to inventory.

CONCLUSION

Best Buy is the largest electronic retailer of cellular phones, televisions, computers, cameras and home appliances. With more than 1,150 stores operating in the United States, Puerto Rico, Canada, Mexico, Turkey and China, Best Buy's products are the most purchased over its competitors. For several years, various complaints on rip-off report.com and other media sites have swarmed the World Wide Web notifying everyone who crosses its path how poor Best Buy's customer service is. The purpose of this proposal was to present a communication plan projected to improve Best Buys customer service etiquette to over 180,000 of its employees, in hopes of regaining consumer loyalty. To help ensure Best Buy customers are satisfied with the products and services it supplies, a strategy followed by numerous tactics were comprised into a 12-week training program.

Best Buy has poor customer service world wide. This growing issue can eventually come to the demise of Best Buy if continuously neglected. Without company loyalty, people will shop elsewhere and Best Buy will be out of business.

The following recommendations are based on these conclusions:

1. Reevaluate the training regimen to insert additional resources that may help maintain any and all improvements made post training.
2. Continuous monitoring of the web and social media to find what is being said about company by consumers.
3. Continuous monitoring of purchased items to initiate a contest for consumers on a highly purchased item. This is another way to show customer appreciation.
4. Impose an incentive program for employees. If the employee feels appreciated it will push them to work smarter and harder.

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