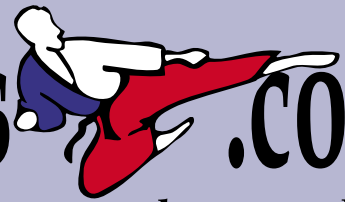


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**COVER
STORY**

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Have A Big Front Door

**Your customer
service policy
can make you,
or break you!**

**Marshall Gagne
President
USHA MGK**

PLUS...

**How To Empower People
Part 2**

By Brain Tracy

**Sell More
Merchandise!
details inside...**

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COVER STORY

Have A Big Front Door

Your customer service policy can make you, or break you!

(Excerpted from the United States Hapkido Association Mu Gong Kwan training manual with permission)

Everyone at our school, from the top down, must be trained in customer service.

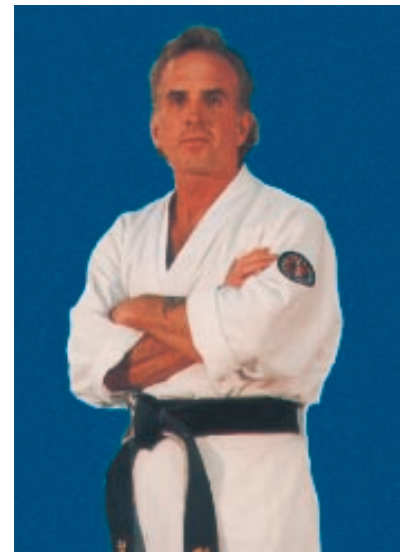
There has been a decline in customer service in the United States over the last five years, and we will not follow.

Business researchers say that two reasons for the decline in customer service is the loss of owner (Ma and Pa type) stores and the booming economy. Maybe some companies have too much business? I personally have never been in that situation sincerely hope that we hire and train enough staff to continue with good customer service.

I have seen the decline in service myself at various businesses. A local bank has such poor customer service that the manger told me not to call her with my problems. That branch office is now closed. I went into a vitamin store and asked the clerk some basic questions and she could not answer them. She said that she just started and that they hadn't trained her at all. They just gave her a book and told to learn as she goes. I sure hope we can top that by about 500%.

I tried to contact anyone from the president of a certain company to two different buyers, with no results. I left messages on the company voice mail, I emailed them, I even told the secretary several times that I needed to speak to someone, and no one ever returned my call. I am not sure if they were not getting the messages or if they were too busy to return my calls. In either case, it was not the right way to treat a customer. I was trying to do business with this company, but now I have changed my mind.

The biggest mistake most people make is not



**Marshall Gagne, President
USHA MGK**

valuing the customer. If there is a problem or an error, we must listen to the customer and defuse the situation using um/yang and the water principal. If the customer is angry and aggravated, we must be calm and relaxed-the opposite of what they are. Show compassion and ask questions. We must learn how to handle complaints.

People cannot be replaced by automation. We must be available, including myself, to answer and help everyone with their problems as soon as possible. My policy is to be open to any student or parent to talk to me in person, by phone or e-mail. I want to have as many ways (options) to contact us as possible, with instant replies.

For example, e-mails must be answered as quickly as possible, so we must check the e-mail 4 or 5 times a day. People use e-mail to get e-information with e-service. If they wanted to wait a few days to get answers the ancient way of regular mail would do.

Only motivated people will succeed. We will hire and train people who are highly motivated and will serve our students with a smile. You must have a smile on your face, even when speaking on the telephone. Front line salespeople must have the freedom to make decisions and the power to carry them out. Listen and learn. React to what the customers want Leaders are followers; they follow what is in demand.

Customer service also means having the right



merchandise, in the right size, at the right price, at the right time. So let's keep a better inventory. The bigger the inventory the more sales. There is an old saying that you can't sell from an empty wagon. *This is true.*

We want to have the best customer service, but when we're on the floor it is still all about Martial Arts. The most important thing for us to do is to create a great experience for the students. Training must be motivational, exciting and challenging. The best instructors have charisma and experience. And, they must be able to transfer a positive don't-give-up-attitude to the students. Our goal is to teach our students how to be successful not only in martial arts, but also in life.

All instructors need to be able to give quality announcements. If you're not excited about the event, they won't be either. Don't emphasize small details when that information is on our fliers. Tell them why should go and if you can't go don't emphasize that. Tell them they will a great time, meet everyone and enjoy the picnic. It is nice to have a Black Belt table but please don't just sit there together for the whole party. You can have fun but don't forget that all the Black Belts and staff are hosting the party. Our job is to mingle and oversee. Make sure that everyone is enjoying his or her self. Mingle, make short conversation, introduce yourself, and create an opportunity for conversation. Talk Martial Arts-tell parents and students how spiritual the Arts are. Make everyone feel welcome and motivated.

After class, the business kicks in. If you're not skilled in this field, just be courteous and turn the problem over to someone who is. Make sure someone addresses the problem. Don't just write a note that maybe lost.

If we increase our customer service quality by 5 %, it will increase our income by 25% to 85%. It is very important to have superior customer service attitude because it gives our customers a reason to come back.

To really keep them coming back, we must create a big front door and a small back door. If you want to lock the back door, come friends with the students and their parents. Talk to them. A

good way to start is by asking the students what we can do to make our school better. Even just a short 30 second conversation is enough.

Make the extra effort. Remember to use their names in conversation. Think about it. When someone remembers your name, it makes you feel special. Developing a good relationship with the students and their parents in important for retention. Everyone wants to have a place to go where they feel accepted. Once the relationship is established and the students feel that they are accepted, they will want to keep coming back.

Our job is to get new members and retain the ones we have. If we all work on this, we will have the greatest martial arts association ever.

Remember, it doesn't matter how big that we get, we must always act as if we are small (Um/Yang). If your head gets too big, you will fall over. Help everyone the best you can without giving him or her a hard time. One of the best things in life is helping others.

I read an article about a large company that took back a tire from an elderly lady just to please her. Once she received her refund, the lady went into the store and spent the money that they returned to her. The lady told everyone how great the store was and they definitely earned a repeat customer.

Remember, if just one person goes away angry or dissatisfied, they will tell more than 30 people. Word-of-mouth means everything in this business.

We want to have a big front door and lock the back!

"The greatest risk is not taking one!"

"Stand for something or you will fall for anything."

Let's do it!

Marshall Gagne, President
USHA MGK

► *Master Gagne an 8th degree Black Belt and president and founder United States Hapkido Mu Gong Kwan Association. Visit them on the web at www.ushapki.com. Or call 734-692-3960*