

## **CAREER NOTES**

**By Dick Bradow, PGA Employment Services Consultant**

You've gone to great lengths to provide outstanding service to your customers – ongoing staff training, attention to detail, thorough event preparation, etc. But regardless of your best efforts, customer complaints are still bound to occur – the shipment that was late, the umbrella your staff “lost,” the slow group on the course, the golf car that ran out of juice, etc.

Complaints can be the acid test of your relationship with your customers and how they feel about your business. How you and your staff respond can either take your relationship to a higher level, or can completely destroy it. You have probably had a disappointing experience with a product or service yourself – how was the issue handled? What was the attitude of the employees involved? How did you feel about the overall experience? Did your experience strengthen or weaken your relationship and loyalty to the company?

When a customer's experience does not meet their expectations, there are a number of possible actions they may take. The most obvious is that they will decide to take their business elsewhere. If they are a member of a private club, they may continue to play golf at the club but may not buy from the golf shop or take lessons from you and your staff. If their experience was at a daily fee or resort facility, they may choose not to return at all.

Even worse, they will likely share their disappointing experience with other club members or golfing friends, further tarnishing your image and reputation.

Complaints should be viewed as an opportunity to demonstrate your commitment to serving the customer. Here are some tips for you and your staff to remember:

- Allow the customer to explain the problem. Remain patient and listen, and avoid the temptation to interrupt or become defensive.
- Sincerely apologize for the inconvenience and reaffirm your commitment to excellent service.
- Ask probing questions to get a complete understanding of the problem or inconvenience the customer has encountered.
- Explain what may have gone wrong without placing blame.
- Ask the customer what action they would like to see taken.
- If appropriate and within policy, rectify the problem immediately. If immediate action is not feasible, tell the customer you will investigate the problem and follow up with them as quickly as possible.
- Prevent a recurrence of the problem by getting to the underlying cause.
- Restore your customer's confidence in you and your facility by following up to make sure the customer is satisfied.

If handled properly, a positive resolution to a complaint can build trust and solidify the relationship with your customer. Even better, a customer who leaves your facility satisfied will sing your praises to friends, enhancing your reputation and driving future business.

I hope you are having a successful season – please don't hesitate to contact me for assistance with any PGA employment and career services.

***Dick Bradow is a PGA Member and Employment Services Consultant for the PGA of America. He can be contacted at (502) 458-2002 or by e-mail at [dbradow@pgahq.com](mailto:dbradow@pgahq.com).***