

# MetaManagement Communicator

MetaMatrix Consulting Group, LLC.  
Consulting & Speaking Services

Article This Issue:  
KEEPING CUSTOMERS:  
When things go wrong.

EDUCATIONAL CONFUSION:  
Awareness is not an  
Education

Information created to inform, educate and prepare management to lead

## KEEPING CUSTOMERS: When things go wrong.

In business, it's not always what a firm does when things are going well, it's what happens when things go sour that makes the difference. In any operation from service to product sales, business is made up of small incremental activities that enhance the relationship between people. One notices an ad, just walks into a store, or gets a referral to use a particular firm for a particular service. From the front counter or the telephone call, firms focus so much attention on the front end of the business cycle that they often forget that at some point something will go wrong. A table may be delivered scratched, a machine may not fit the exact floor space requested, a program or event may be cancelled, in each case this is the point that separates the firm from all the other firms.

Wal-Mart sticks behind what it sells and on almost any given day customers are returning items that did not fit their needs. Normally, its no questions asked. (Maybe they should find out more.) Retail firms like Home Depot and Macy's have it easier than firms that sell \$10,000 or \$2,000,000 manufacturing tools. Service based firms such as a poor theater performance or an itinerary change during a convention may not always have the ability to turn back the clock.

Let's look at the picture from another perspective. We have ordered \$200,000 pieces of equipment that did not work as intended. We have bought products that were manufactured improperly and we have had our food delivered too slowly. The irritation that overcomes us arrives when we find out that our unexpected experience with the new product is normal. When we purchase an item, we may think for months or days about such an issue. The compounded systems too easily rectify the situation can easily destroy any relationship that may have taken years to develop.

As this article touches everyone from education to government and job descriptions from Hourly Employment Supervisor to CEO, no one is void of at least contemplating this situation. In larger corporations, IT might only work internally and a programming error may use up budgeted monies in another department, accounting's billing mistakes may lose a customer and hurt a salesperson. Everyone has a customer that they are responsible to. Review how your firm handles problems and how you specifically would handle the situation.

1. Are there systems and policies for others to follow?
2. Has authority been given to rectify the situation and to

what cost?

3. Is the firm focused on the next sale or the real problem of the customer? (You might have missed a deadline that in turn cancelled at large contract.)
4. What is your long term goal for the organization?
5. Who is responsible to make sure the customer is happy over the length of the problem? (Does everyone have to always ask for the president or manager to get some attention?)
6. Is your firm leading the industry, or just following others?

Firms that stick behind their products, statistically do better than firms that are out for one shot deals. The first 4 wheel drive we purchased was a Chevy and since then we have spent over \$350,000 with GMAC, while the firm that sold us the \$200,000 piece of equipment never had a sale from us again. The old adage it takes more to generate a new customer than to keep a current customer is quite true. Make sure you spend as much time building new relationships with old customers as you spend trying to bring in new ones.

## EDUCATIONAL CONFUSION: Awareness is not an Education

The other day, we received a call from an area manager in large multinational firm looking to have a presentation given to several business owners. His objective was to get a "state of the economy" presentation so that these individuals will be able to better plan for the future. During the conversation, I kindly asked, "What are they to do with the information?" To this he replied they can run their business better. Again, I beat the point harder, "If I was to tell them there was an increase in unemployment or that the state is enacting laws that will lower their fuel costs over the next 2 years, what would they do with that information?" His reply was vague and misdirected.

Have we come to the point that we would rather hear news (as we now define it) than learn how to translate the information into something useful? Here are a few examples.

1. ABC News Reports "Distress Calls: US Spy plane made up to 20 mayday calls" Involving the spy plane in China and the current situation.
2. Computerworld Reports "Confidence in B2B sinks to major low" Reviewing the situation as business exchanges from Ariba to GM wrestle with the future of online exchanges.
3. Fortune Reports "Buried in Tech" Informing readers that confidence is at an all time low for technology spending.
4. Inc Reports "Fanatics!" How during slow economic times

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## EDUCATIONAL CONFUSION: Awareness is not an Education Continued Page 2

small firms can grab the upper hand by offering better service and rapid changes to meet customers needs.

What does this information do besides make one aware of current events. Even I might shoot myself in the foot as I mention that readers must be looking for solutions and methods of changing current situations to their advantage. The problem is that much of what we read and learn is just for the sake of awareness and nothing more. To make matters worse, not much will ever come of the 20 best practices article one read last month or the day to day grind of keeping up with all the clutter.

Honestly, everyone who sends out a newsletter is looking to be heard and remembered. It's our way of keeping in touch with our clients, customers and prospects. iHealthcare, Silicon Alley, and the thousands of other publications fight for the same few-minutes time slot and hopefully a few ads will make a return on the investment. The MetaManagement Communicator tries to step over the boundaries of just awareness to reality and in many cases "education" which is often missing in news or articles today. Sure we would love to put in advertising or market our services. On our end it's our belief that when looking for consultants, a speaker or even a professional coach we will be remembered for real content. Awareness with education creates change and you need both.

Education is more than just the two minutes spent reading an article. It requires follow-up on the reader's end. When we mention Wheelwright and Clark for New Product Development, Jeremy Rifkin as a Futurist or Leonard Goodstein (and others) for Strategic Planning, the door is open to create real change. I guess, it's our desire that you take some of the issues and transform them from a brief shot in the arm to reality in whatever capacity the reader lives thereby enhancing their personal and professional lives.

Getting back to the call, the Area Manager did not realize the difference between awareness/information and skills transfer. If the real objective of the call was to help his group utilize current information in a way that would help them gain an advantage over their competition, then management is on target... "because there has been a drop in xyz population, and this is what you should do." His real job is to educate and not to be out looking for a "clown with a bouncing ball." With

political and economic changes in the air, management must be focused on real change.

## SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Often we are emailed or asked in person, "When can I hear you speak (again)?" Since most programs are closed to the public, there are few occasions when we can accommodate the requests. This program, however, is an open event, meaning anyone can attend. Please pass the information along to others that may benefit from learning about how to develop management and leadership from the perspective of both the individual and the organization. The program will tie together many pieces of information that we offer in our newsletters and consulting services.

Date: May 17, 2001

Location: Ramada Inn

North Syracuse, NY

Time: 7:30 Breakfast and Registration 8-9:00 Presentation

Breakfast and Program Ticket \$25.00

Program to Benefit: Junior Achievement

Sponsors: Business Journal of CNY

Greater Syracuse Chamber

Syracuse Planner

Leadership Greater Syracuse

Peerless Press

The Events Company

Visual Technologies

MetaMatrix Consulting Group LLC

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