



This story provides two similar national food store situations. One provided “A+” service; the other exemplifies service that missed the grade. What do you expect when you go for groceries?

Situation One – Calgary Coop, South Trail Crossing Location

I went into Coop to pick up raspberries that had been on sale in the flyer. When I couldn’t find them readily, I asked a manager to assist me. He took me directly to the location where they should be stocked. When realizing they were not any left he took it upon himself to get a stock clerk to assist us, rather than sending me looking for one myself. When he realized there were not any in stock he provided me with a small container free of charge and a rain check for the larger basket. A simple example, but what did he do right?

- **Personal assistance** from start to finish instead of pointing or directing me to find someone myself.
- **Searching** to find the product when it wasn’t available on the floor instead of just telling me they were out.
- **Wowing** me by providing a small basket free of charge and a rain check as compensation for my troubles without my having to ask. A small token of minimal cost to the store provided in a manner so natural it seemed he didn’t even think twice about it.

Did he do anything costly or extravagant to go the extra mile for me? No. Perception is reality and I left feeling good about this experience based on my previous experiences with other stores. Let’s take a look at one of my previous experiences (the name of the store will remain anonymous).

Situation Two

This experience had me out to the store for pickling vinegar and other canning supplies. Armed with my list I quickly found everything except the vinegar. Standing in the vinegar aisle and finding every kind but what I needed, I looked around for a store clerk. Two were standing very close and so I walked over hoping for assistance. What I found were two clerks engaged in a personal conversation so I stood there quietly waiting to be acknowledged. After a few minutes one looked at me in a manner that said “you are interrupting my conversation – what do you want?” I took my opportunity and asked if they had pickling vinegar. I was told to look in the vinegar aisle (standing in the vinegar aisle I asked myself, do they really think I would ask if I hadn’t already looked)? I explained there wasn’t any and the clerk told me in a dumbfounded manner that she really didn’t know if they had any. She didn’t expand on this so I asked if she could find someone who might know. To this I received a “hmmm, everyone is really busy and I don’t know if I could find anyone”. I need to qualify that this visit occurred mid-week, mid-morning and the store was anything but busy. I asked if she could try and was told to go to the front of the store and ask customer service. I did and again found someone who didn’t know his or her products. After going through a manager, a runner finally overheard us and let me know they didn’t carry it. Hmmm, does anyone in this store know his or her products? You may be asking where did the second clerk go and did he help? The answer is no. When he heard me asking for help he took off. What could be improved in this situation?

- **Know** your products.
- **Walk** the customer to the location or person they need to speak with instead of pointing and directing.
- **Stop** personal conversations immediately when a customer approaches – they should be made to feel like they are most important. After all, without customers you don’t really need clerks.

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- **Don't run off** when a customer approaches needing help. If the first clerk didn't know the answer, maybe the second clerk might have.
- **Don't leave a poor impression** of the store in the customer's mind based on the attitude you portray in your words, tone and body language.

This situation could have been completely different with just a few of the basic customer service principles practiced. As you can see from the two situations, WOW service doesn't have to be costly and it isn't hard in theory. You can gain an advantage simply by providing better service than your next competitor.