

5/1/2021

I Really Like Your Peaches

Amanda Thomsen



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I feel like I write some iteration of this message every spring, but this year it's needed more than ever. The busy season is here, it's hard and it's already been a difficult year. People are so extra weird right now. Supplies are short and so are tempers. I'd like to pump you up with some of the ways I've dealt with customer situations that left me with my integrity and ability to then turn around and help the next customer instead of running into the bathroom for a silent scream.

1. We don't have what the customer is asking for. No one does. It's lean times right now: "We don't have that in right now, and in the current state of things, I couldn't tell you when we'll get it back in stock. Would you like to look at some alternatives that I personally love and I think you will, too?"
2. The customer wants help with plants not purchased in your store. "This is our busiest time of the year, where we make 80% of our total sales for the year. I'm sure you can understand that our priority is helping customers that have purchased plants from us."
3. This item doesn't have a price. "We work very hard and take a lot of pride in what we do; working outdoors in the elements has its challenges. I might add this last year has been difficult for everyone. We employ a full-time staff of 10 and a part-time staff of 14 people. So, no, that unpriced 4-pack is not free."
4. Charity requests. "We deeply care about the community, but due to the nature of our business, requests from nonprofits need to be submitted in January or February. We simply cannot accommodate right now."
5. Ridiculous telephone requests. "I have a line of customers here, in-person, and I need to take care of them first. The best course of action would be to try and Google an answer to that problem and if that doesn't work, I have insomnia from my high-stress, low-rewards career, so just email me your questions at help@gardencenterx.com and I'll answer it at 2:30 a.m."
6. Ridiculous in-person requests. "What would you do, as a business person, in my position?" (Then listen in between the lines)
7. People needing intense hand holding. "I have to run and check on a customer that came in before you, I'll be back in a bit. We write all our informative signage here so it's detailed and correct for this area, so use that as a guide until I come back."

8. “You’re so lucky to work outside with pretty flowers!” “Yes, many years after this occupation became my entire life and personality, I learned about how you don’t have to make money off your hobbies, you can just do them for ... pleasure and relaxation, but it was already too late for me.”

9. People with the audacity. “Oh, you know we’re outdoors, but this is a retail establishment just like any other—the rules still apply.”

I know we all came up in the world with “the customer is always right” mentality, but heck, we all know that isn’t true (including the customers) and it’s enough to drive a staff into wanting to live in a cave. It’s OK to create boundaries and stick to them because that will help preserve the mental energy to have integrity and accountability in the workplace instead of just walking into the flames (and straight into burnout) each day.

Not every customer can be YOUR customer. And it’s not every day that I get to quote a burlesque dancer in Green Profit, but I remind myself daily of the Dita Von Teese quote, “You can be the juiciest, ripest peach in the world and you’re still going to find somebody that hates peaches.”

And you can’t feel bad because you’re the peach; you just have to be there, authentically, for the customers that do love peaches. **GP**

Amanda Thomsen is a funky, punky garden writer and author. Her blog is planted at KissMyAster.com and you can follow her on Facebook, Twitter AND Instagram @KissMyAster.