



A Day With Steve Mulvany

by Kristi Corbett

At the Landmark conference in Florida, Steve Mulvany, President of Management Tools Inc., gave a presentation on customer service which caused many members to make fundamental changes to the way in which they operate.

"My objective today", began Mulvany, "is that each of you in this room walks away with one or two things you can do differently to cause your customers to think that you're doing a great job for them versus an average job."

"Think about your service strategy as a way to add market share and also as a way to be able to charge the prices you deserve." Service superiority enables companies to gain a competitive advantage without slashing prices. Mulvany went on to speak in detail about his main service beliefs.

Service is a philosophy, not a department, program or policy, and **It starts within the company**, he emphasized. "Do you treat your staff the way you would expect them to treat your customers?" All employees should be involved with the service strategy and it should be recognized that non-management staff really do have a big impact on customers.

Another of Mulvany's beliefs is that **service is not natural, automatic, nor coincidental — it is planned.** It is management's role to establish, model and maintain the spirit of service, otherwise it will not last. Once the strategy is in action, key performance indicators should be recorded, such as the ratio of customer complaints to customer compliments.

Service Strategy . . . a way to add market share and charge the prices you deserve.

Service also means exceeding customers' expectations. "Do you empower all your staff to go beyond customers' expectations by allowing them to do something for a customer outside their normal duties? Does every employee have the right to exchange goods and deal with complaints, for example?"

He then questioned whether managers recognize the top 10-15% of their customers in terms of gross profit contribution and treat them as VIPs accordingly. Management should be aware of the importance of first and last(ing) impressions, he argued. And when complaints do arise,

they should be turned into opportunities by going one step further than apologizing and resolving the situation—something extra perhaps should be done to show the customer how much his business is valued, such as offering to assist him with merchandising or helping him load his vehicle.

The last point which Mulvany stressed was that **service superiority and sales are inseparable.** "The reason you're doing more service is so you can enhance sales; the reason you're doing more sales is so the customer thinks you're doing more service", he maintained.

"Look at your business through your customers' eyes", he advised, "and although the customer is not always right, treat him as though he is...Yes, the customer is going to rip you off sometimes, but if he does it too much, tell him you can't service him anymore".

"A day with Steve Mulvany" had lessons to be learned by all, whether managing director, supervisor, shop floor employee, or journalist. Unlike some who chose not to attend, those who did and have implemented his forward-thinking philosophies are no doubt reaping the rewards.