

Customer Service That SELLS to BOOMERS

By Bob Phibbs



Comes From TRAINING MILLENNIALS

6 Practical Tips That Drive Sales

When you are focused on creating a team culture of *customer service*, it is important to realize how generational differences can impact the selling process.

That Generation Gap was on display recently when Graham, a friend of mine walked into a local electronics store to buy a microphone. The young sales associate took him to the microphones and then stood there silently hovering over him.

The associate wasn't helping with anything; in fact Graham didn't think he knew anything about microphones. Finally he said, "I'm fine." The clerk replied, "I only get a commission if I stay here."

Most Baby Boomers would not consider that good customer service—in fact, they would consider it just the opposite. The Millennial employee on the other hand thought he was doing his job.

That's the Generation Gap

The Baby Boomers grew up when retail still had people who chose working retail as a career and modeled exceptional customer service. They grew up minding their "p's and q's" meaning they had to mind their manners. Most had entry-level jobs where they were taught how to help a customer in a friendly manner. As such, they expect when they go out to a store to still receive that kind of treatment.

The Millennial generation—those under about 32—grew up with the Internet. Efficient, fast and cheap were things that became increasingly important to their generation as they conducted their lives online. Most did not have entry-level jobs so the social skills necessary to engage a stranger in many cases just weren't developed.

Millennials grew up digital natives communicating with their friends on their computers. Both Boomers and Millennials wanted to have friendships, but Boomers had to do it in person while Millennials could do it virtually.

Here's the rub: 75% of purchases will still come from Baby Boomers expecting personal service for the foreseeable future.

Unless your business is able to give Baby Boomers the customer service they expect, you'll see less and less of them.

To ensure that your Millennial staff are properly equipped to sell to the Boomer generation, utilize these six training tips:

Initiative

Don't make Boomers come to you—find them. Boomers do not want to ask, "Can you help me?" or "Where do I pay?" Keep your head up and engage them regularly. And once a Boomer is ready to leave, they're ready to leave.

Hustle

Your speed of service has to be given in proportion to the amount of customers in your store. Your head must be up and looking at who just came in, who needs help and who needs to be rung up. If you ignore Boomers they'll walk.

Being Included

Boomers want to fit in, they want to be popular. They were the ones who wanted a trophy but someone else got it. Unlike the Millennials, they are still looking for validation. And for Boomers, it comes from owning things.

High Touch Over High Tech

A Millennial salesperson could show a virtual product but a Baby Boomer wants to touch it. Boomers want to see it for themselves—that's why they are in your store and not shopping online for the item. They still want to feel, touch, smell and experience it.

The Choice of Right Words

Avoid phrases like "no problem" and the word "like" as in "this printer is like the fastest we have." Boomers in general are old school and appreciate proper grammar.

Connecting the Dots

It is great to connect with customers and build rapport, but you have to go further with Boomers. You need to connect the dots between what they want and what you have to sell. If you sell electronics for example, you want to be able to keep connecting them to the item you have in stock, selling it in a way that says, "It's not just a device, it's all the things it can do for you." Again, this is the generation that doesn't like to return things – they want to get it right the first time.

In Summary

Selling to Baby Boomers is not that hard. You have to make it personal. Respect the fact that they took the afternoon off from the kids and work, and they are in your shop to buy from you.

Despite job-hopping that's occurring across the country, Millennials' commitment to their job is typically very high. They're looking to acquire new skillsets and experiences. Make sure you are training them so they can deliver world-class customers experience.

If not, you risk not only losing their interest in working there, but Boomers interest in shopping with you.

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