

Do You Know What's at the Top of Your Customers' Irritation Lists?

By Marilyn Suttle

As part of an experiment, I got out a pad of paper and pen, and walked through each room of my house finding things to add to my irritation list. Anything that bugged me got put on the list. The chipped paint in my dining room, the small rip in the lining of my lamp shade, the disorganized storage area in the basement – no matter how big or small, I wrote it down. At first, my irritation list was long, and ... irritating. Prioritizing and delegation changed all that. After a family meeting, the who, what, and by-when's were added to the list. (I admit this idea got a cold reception at first, but my husband and son got on board, adding some of their own irritations to the list and negotiating responsibilities.)

One by one, over the next six months, the house shaped up. As the list grew smaller, my energy and enthusiasm skyrocketed.

Consider what might happen if you were to create a customer irritation list at your place of business. It's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day running of your business and lose sight of the irritations that ultimately undermine your success.

It's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day running of your business and lose sight of the small things that ultimately undermine your success.

Do you know what's at the top of your customers' irritation lists? Over time, those irritations may be the deciding factor that pushes customers toward your competitor.

Points to help you break through irritations:

- Be eager to learn what's on your customers' irritation lists. (Don't forget the people inside your company, aka your internal customers. Their irritations ultimately spill over onto your paying customers.)
- Notice your role in creating the problem or allowing it to continue.
- For each irritation, brainstorm several ways to handle it and pick the best one.
- Divvy up or delegate.

Enjoy the results!

What do you think? What workplace irritations are you committed to eliminating?

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Marilyn Suttle is the coauthor of Who's Your Gladys? How to Turn Even the Most Difficult Customer into Your Biggest Fan. Marilyn travels internationally to deliver service excellence keynotes and workshops. Marilyn inspires her clients to excel by creating strong, productive

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