

## How Well Do You Manage Expectations?

written by Lori Jo Vest

If you've ever gone through the process of building a house from the ground up with a developer, you know how challenging it can be. In our book, "Who's Your Gladys?", we tell the story of a company in New England called The Green Company. They build houses and condominiums, though what they really do is create communities for their residents. They're also masters of building longterm customer relationships. One of the ways they do that is by properly managing their customers' expectations.

When you build a house, there are some stages in the process that are ugly. When they're first building a home and they dig the big hole for the basement, a future homeowner may stop by to visit their house and find a foot of water in the basement. Yikes! If they don't know better, they may freak out and call the builder, worried about future water leaks.

The Green Company avoids this type of customer concern by placing a lot of attention on managing expectations. If somebody buys a house and they've never done it before, they may not understand that there will be a time when they come by to look at the house and their basement may be full of water. As they put the basement in at the very beginning, the drainage hasn't been set yet so heavy rain may mean three inches of water on the basement.

Fortunately for customers of the Green Company, their developer tells them the good, the bad and the ugly – in advance. They tell that customer the things that are going to happen that they might not like. Then they explain why it's okay and how they're going to resolve anything "ugly" that occurs.

Managing customer expectations is extremely important to the process of keeping a connected positive relationship. Customers who know what's going to happen, and know that it will be resolved, will become more loyal. Period.

**What do you think?** How can you manage potentially negative customer expectations at your place of business?

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*Co-author of the customer service bestseller, "Who's your Gladys? How to Turn Even the Most Difficult Customer into Your Biggest Fan," Lori Jo Vest has been involved in relationship-based sales and customer service for over 20 years. She has developed extensive marketing, sales and customer service expertise through her work in business-to-business sales and marketing positions. She consults with mid-sized and second stage businesses on methods to enhance their sales and customer service efforts through one-on-one awareness campaigns, methods for*

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