

Recently I have told you stories of poor customer service. Now it's time to tell you that some businesses can get customer service right. This is a story about one of those businesses. With two teenage boys in the house, keeping them fed is a full time job. One is 6'9", weighs 245 pounds and eats like you would expect. The other is 6'0", weighs 145 and eats as much as his big brother. So when we can find a deal you can bet we take it. We found a Sunday night, 2 large pizzas for \$20 deal at a local sports bar and grill, Benchwarmers. Between my wife and I and the two boys, we figured that would be just about enough food for one meal.

Since there were four of us eating, we decided that we could order $\frac{1}{2}$ a pizza each, where the boys would certainly eat the $\frac{1}{2}$ they ordered plus another $\frac{1}{4}$ of ours. It turned out that we did order 4 different types of pizza, all of their house specialties, but without jalapenos or onions. A short while later the pizzas came to our table. Since there was not enough room for all of our drinks and two pizzas, the waitress was great and pulled another table next to ours. The BBQ chicken pizza was fantastic, as was the meat lover. Unfortunately we noticed that the jalapenos were baked into $\frac{1}{2}$ of one pizza.

At the table we debated if we should simply eat the pizza as presented (we were getting a great deal) or say something. In the end, we decided to point out the mistake to the waitress. She was very apologetic and immediately told us she would take care of the problem by ordering another pizza for us without the jalapenos. No charge to us. Digging into the bacon cheeseburger pizza that was supposed to be onion free, we noticed that it did in fact have onions. This time we decided that we would keep this little slip up to ourselves.

We were happily eating our meal when the waitress came to our table and she was not happy. She apologized a second time and told us that the kitchen had lost our replacement pizza order. We could get the order in right away, but it would be another 15 minutes or so for the pizza to cook. Regardless of what we decided on the replacement pizza, she told us that we would not be paying for any of the food or drink that night.

Very often a mistake is a time when true customer service is revealed. It can be an opportunity to shine or whine.

Our waitress did all the right things; she gave us a sincere apology (even though the problem was not her fault); she gave us an acceptable solution, and finally she went over and above what was expected. She could have discounted the price of $\frac{1}{2}$ of one pizza, because we ate the rest of it and that would have been fair. The waitress at Benchwarmers understood all the rules of customer service.

Finally it appeared she did all of this without asking a manager! The owners have empowered their employees to make good decisions on their behalf. It was a very refreshing night compared to my previous customer service woes.

You can bet that we will be back at Benchwarmers for more food and drink. The food was outstanding and the service was even better. By the way, we did leave a very nice tip, a reflection of the great service we received!

Small Business Today is a bi-weekly feature written by Tom Friedman, market president of First National Bank, Ames-Ankeny.