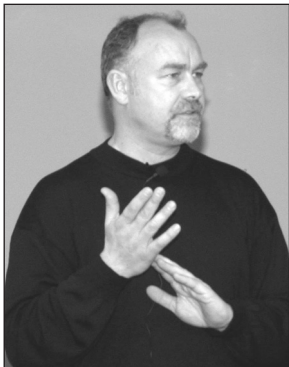


## AT YOUR SERVICE

# Things you need for great service

**W**hat does it take to be a good service contractor? Everyone will agree that a good service contractor is one that



Mark Matteson.

can solve tough problems and keep indoor comfort systems working. This makes customers happy. And isn't keeping customers happy the service contractor's goal?

But customers surely know there are several contractors with the technical know-how to fix their problem. So what exactly separates contractor A from contractor B, and what makes the customer choose one over the other?

Mark Matteson believes people shop for service contractors much like they shop for books to buy, movies to see or restaurants to visit. At a recent seminar on Customer Service Excellence he conducted in the Chicago area, Matteson said things like testimonials of past customers, whether gleaned from your company brochure or from the lips of trusted friends and associates whose

opinions they value, are a factor. And since customers know little about the technical side of service, their opinion of you will focus on the non-technical aspects of their experience with your company.

Most customers buy on their perceived value of you and not price, Matteson said. How do you create value?

By going the extra mile, by making them say "wow"! By arriving clean and on time and by leaving their site better than you found it.

**"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."**

Yes, it's important that the attitude of the service manager on the telephone and the technician who shows up the at their door communicates *caring*. A good appearance by itself, however, won't necessarily help you stand out from the crowd. It has to be linked with performance that goes the extra mile. It's these mostly non-technical things you do, little or big, that show how much you care and that enhance your perceived value.

**Be a good listener.** The best salespeople are usually not the best talkers but "world-class listeners." Good listening skills — for service man-

agers and technicians — are important and usually don't come naturally. Matteson's L.P.Q.P. process for becoming a better listener includes these four steps:

hard to do, especially for men, Matteson noted, who are accustomed to jumping right in at the first opportunity. So a little discipline is necessary.

mean funny noise, can you give me an example'?"

4. **Paraphrase** what you think you heard the customer say. This shows you really listened and understand what needs to be done.

**Empathy is another component of great service.** The dictionary defines empathy as "the ability to identify with and understand another person's feelings or difficulties." Matteson believes this is another area where women seem to have an advantage over men. A tall man who has frequently hit his head when walking through doorways, he points to the different reactions this

action is likely to evoke between the sexes. Women who witness it are likely to respond with an "o-o-o-o" sound that demonstrates greater empathy of the suffering, whereas men will respond with an "ow" that mostly means "I'm glad it wasn't me."

**Create a level of expectation and then exceed it.** In a recent visit to his favorite steak house, Matteson was told there was a 45-minute wait for a table. He stayed judging it would be worth the wait. The surprise and excitement he experienced when he was actually seated 15

minutes later were a result of that expectation being beat-

**Customers might forget what you say and what you do, but they are always going to remember how you made them feel.**

— Mark Matteson

1. **Listen** actively always making eye contact and never interrupting the person speaking except perhaps to convey brief reactions like "You're kidding" or "That's terrible."

2. **Pause** 3 or 4 seconds before responding when it

3. **Question** what the other person said. Ask "How do you mean..." or "Can you give me an example?" "If the customer says, 'Well, the unit is making a funny noise,' some techs might spend the next couple hours looking for a funny



Since they know little about the technical aspects of what you do, customers will focus more on how they perceive you when choosing a service contractor; author and presenter Mark Matteson told service managers and technicians gathered at the Customer Service Excellence seminar.

is clear the other person is finished talking. This is

noise. But the seasoned tech will ask, 'How do you

en. If you know it will take 2 hours to get to a customer's location, why not tell them it will take 4 hours. "When you create an expectation and then beat it, it makes the customer happy."

**Reliability builds your integrity.** When you keep your word you have integrity. Promise only what you can do and then deliver on the promise. If you do so, it's all but guaranteed you will get repeat business. Reliability also builds trust. "It takes a thousand acts to build it but only one to destroy it. I'd say trust is one of the hallmarks, one of the keys of great service," Matteson said.

**Go the extra mile.** If you spot something while on the customer's roof you can easily fix yourself, why not fix it? It might not take that much work on your part and could pay off for you down the road. Matteson once encountered a large beehive on a customer's roof. Later he asked the customer "Have you had any problems with bees in the building?" The customer was surprised and wondered, "How did you know this?" In fact, a number of tenants had complained of

bee stings and no one could figure out where the bees had come from. Matteson returned in the evening, when the bees returned to the nest, to rid the building of the problem. His care and service beyond the call of duty resulted in service contracts for 8 additional buildings from that customer. "What are some of the extra mile things you can do, from a technician's perspective and from a service manager's perspective?" Matteson asks.

"The purpose of business is "to get and keep customers," Matteson said. And demonstrating a record of performance that goes the extra mile will help accomplish both objectives. In a survey that studied why companies lose customers, 68% of respondents — more than two thirds — said they were turned away by an "attitude of indifference." The next highest reason, dissatisfaction with the product or service, measured only 14%. That's telling.

"Customers might forget what you say and what you do, but they are always going to remember how you made them

feel." It's the feelings that drive them back to your company, Matteson said.

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## Simulator *(Continued from page 7)*

explained. The transition from design to construction could be counted on to demand lots of care and coordination.

"It's quite an intense effort to make sure everything goes in when and where it is needed," Mangold said. "All contractors are working very well together to make this thing

come together," he added.

A vast, hangar-like structure across the street from the simulator, once used as an indoor drill area, has provided space for storage and fabrication of components. In fact, Brown and his crew have used the building to fabricate much of the mechanical room between schedule openings.

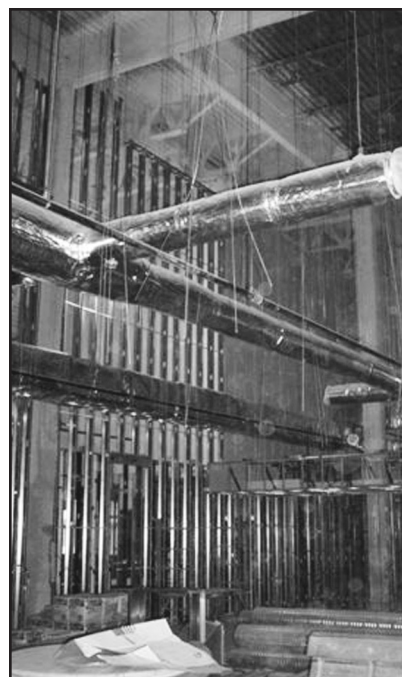
With nearly all of the mechanical systems built, the commissioning process has begun. "We will go through a period of running all the

equipment, and once that's done there will be a commissioning of the entire project, making sure everything including special effects works," Mangold said.

Construction began in October 2005. When it is completed in February 2007, *Battle Stations 21* will become one of the base's "signature" landmarks. It will be a first and the only one of its kind in all the military branches.

"It's a good feeling to know you're involved with something that is for the overall good of our country. And I believe all our pipe fitters are taking great

pride in their work on *Battle Stations 21*, knowing they are doing something special," Mangold said.



The piping systems were not only constructed but also designed by Heatmasters, a member of the contractor-led design/build team.

## Tips from pros

*(Cont'd from page 5)*

industry. The *Hermans* and the *Marthas*, by definition, are people who came to work. They have a higher expectation of themselves than you would ever impose on them. They can see far past the three-minute mark of where they are with a job — they not only know what they're doing right now, but can see down the road and so can anticipate trouble before it happens. They will constitute 10% to 15% of your crew.

Towards the other end of the scale, in the middle, are the *vanillas*. A vanilla is a worker who believes that if he or she comes to work on time dressed, they have done 110% of the job. If you're going to manage the vanilla properly, you must put the emphasis on the expectation, because they don't have any. How do you jump start a vanilla? PRIDE it's called. You apply the P.R.I.D.E. principle, which stands for *Professional Results In Daily Expectation*. Every time you start the day with a vanilla, give him what you would expect him to get done in that day, in an upbeat fashion. The vanillas are 60%-80% of your work force. They show up.

At the other end of the scale are the *red ants*. With the *red ant*, there's as much work to do at the end of their eight-hour shift as there was at the beginning. In the case of the *red ant emeritus*, there is more work to do at the end of that shift, for the *red ant* will sabotage their own or other people's work. There are several ways to handle a red ant. One is to confront him privately. Get him in your truck or shack alone and say, "Okay, how are we going to do this? I'd like to know how to get

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