

Aiming to please, sometimes missing the mark

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Lexington Park, MD - Labor Day weekend has arrived and the true meaning of the day is lost in the hype of kids getting their last fix of prolonged freedom until school restarts and grownups regretting the fun summer stuff they didn't get to experience due to rain or some other unforeseen development. While its original intent was to honor the controversial American Labor Movement, it is now considered a day to salute all workers.

The average American worker takes a lot of criticism from other Americans. This is likely due to our country's free enterprise system where businesses compete for clients. Our research shows that a lot of dissatisfied customers put their complaints in writing. Here's a quick sampling with the names of the complainants and offending businesses withheld to guard against embarrassment and retaliation.

To a restaurant - "Horrible food and drink service. Seemed very disorganized overall. A bug was in my wine."

To a retail store - "Not only did you lose a sale but you have a false advertisement plastered across your entrance that you have a best price guarantee that you don't even honor within your own four walls."

To a fast food restaurant - "The coupon was buy one adult entrée, get a kid's meal free. When we ordered, we were given an attitude and the assistant manager said, 'so where's the kid?' "

To a department store chain - "I ordered a comforter. They sent the wrong one. I called and they said they fixed the problem and resent. It was supposed to take three days. It took seven and once again they sent the wrong item."

To a grocery store - "Today, I purchased this salad which clearly I should have looked at more carefully because it is well past its 'enjoy by' date and was gross."

To a pizza chain - "I placed a complaint about this store and was told corporate would be in touch with that particular owner. Obviously, corporate cares about as much as the owner does."

To a car dealership - "Why do your service departments not answer phones, like for hours?"

To a bank - "I have been a customer 13 years and will be changing to a new bank now that there is a \$7 service charge automatically taken out which I never agreed to and was never even notified."

Occasionally, businesses do receive quick compliments, an 'atta boy or an 'atta girl,' either verbally or in writing. However, in all likelihood, customers with no complaints perhaps feel their money, their remittance of the bill and, in some cases, adding a tip, is a more than sufficient way of saying thanks.

Perhaps you too, have found that a majority of businesses are soliciting feedback. This is usually in the form of a restrictive, time-consuming survey [scales of one to 10, you know the drill] which isn't always a sufficient way to document your experience. If you have mixed feelings about what you have experienced, you could just skip right to the "additional comments" and tell your story.

Every day you get out of bed and go to work, you must prove yourself all over again. Today's employee of the month can quickly find themselves unemployed. Another way to view it is that the new day is an opportunity at redemption. That's the reality in the American workplace. It's better to have a day off than an off day. If Labor Day is a day off for you, we hope it's an enjoyable one. For all workers, we hope you have more good days than bad ones ahead.

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