

Rewarding a Good Sport with a Pleasant Letter.

All, yesterday's column dealt with how to write a letter that enables you to complain about something with the hope of getting a result. To be sure I have written my share of these, not only for myself but for others. For me such writing is kind of a sport. I like the challenge.

Pleasant Letters to a CEO...

Indeed, there are occasions when I have wanted to write a positive letter to the top dog in an organization. This happens when I come across exceptional service from a company that is above and beyond what I would expect.

An Example...

I have been a Schwab customer for a very long time. My portfolio, although very small, is significant to me. About 10 years ago there was a communication from Schwab cautioning people about the possibility of their account be hacked by a cyber-criminal. I wanted to know more. I called Schwab. The person I spoke with wanted to help me and suggested a foolproof method to control access to my account. It involved locking the account, only opening it when I wanted to make a trade. That made sense.

I followed that advice...

Because cybercrime was peaking I locked my account. Couple of weeks later I needed to gain access to it. To my chagrin I discovered that I could not accomplish that. It was frustrating.

What I did...

I made several calls to Schwab to get assistance for unlocking the account. The first two calls were not successful. The third call proved the expression that "three is the charm."

I lucked out. I was connected to a woman who not only understood the problem, but understood how to solve it. It wasn't easy and it wasn't fast. It took approximately 90 minutes. I was extraordinarily impressed by her diligence, thoroughness, patience with me, and overall attitude. She took what was a lemon of an experience and turned it into lemonade. I thanked her very much.

Saying "thanks" didn't really seem like enough...

Unlike just about any other company have ever encountered Schwab provided the e-mail address of the Chief Executive Officer, Walter Bettinger II. He was a major force in the industry. I wrote to him. I doubted that my e-mail would ever reach him; however, that didn't stop me.

My note described my positive experience in detail. I suggested that person who helped me should be cloned. After sending the e-mail, I gave it no further thought.

A surprise telephone call...

Couple of days after I sent the e-mail I received a telephone call from Bettinger's executive assistant. She explained that she was calling because of my note to him. She said that my feedback was very much appreciated and that she had listened to the entire telephone call (apparently everything is recorded when you call certain companies). She, too, was impressed by the help that I received. Continuing she said that my letter had a positive, extremely positive, effect on the career path of the woman who helped me. I felt pretty good about that because she deserved it.

After concluding the call with the executive assistant, I sent a brief acknowledgment to Bettinger saying that I was very surprised to hear from his assistant. And that I am glad that the person who assisted me it was helped by my simple "thank you."

"Call me Walt"...

Much to my surprise I received a reply from Walter Bettinger. The salutation the letter was "Dear Ken." The first sentence of the letter was, "Call me Walt." That took me by surprise.

Walt made a point of thanking me for writing to him, explaining that is rare to get positive feedback such as mine. Also, he mentioned that he was glad to be able to recognize an exceptional Schwab team member. I was impressed by his graciousness.

Why write about this?

Most of the people we encounter in business, sometimes even including ourselves, are doing a job in a way that is "good enough." Admittedly that is satisfactory in nearly all occasions. Nevertheless, there are times when you need someone who is willing to go the extra mile for you. When you encounter that person, it makes good sense to acknowledge them. Plus, it's good manners.

First yawn...

Until tomorrow...

Ken

Ken Artis
Black River Falls, WI