



The Customer Communicator Web Extra



Start a book club with fellow reps

A workplace reading group can be an important part of professional development. Fortunately, there are many excellent books to choose from.

The first book that comes to mind, for Chris Murray, editor of *Soundview Executive Book Summaries*, is *Best Practices in Customer Service*, edited by Ron Zemke, who also wrote the “Knock Your Socks Off” series. “This is an anthology of pieces on a variety of customer service topics by a variety of authors,” says Murray, “so it can also serve as a sampler. Besides offering advice on things like ‘Ten Common Customer Service Mistakes and What You Can Do to Avoid Them’ and ‘Tips for Calming Upset Customers,’ the book can serve to introduce reps to authors they might want to look into more closely.”

Another good customer service title is Jeffrey Gitomer’s *Customer Satisfaction Is Worthless, Customer Loyalty Is Everything*. Gitomer uses an energetic style and wild graphics to convey an important message: “Don’t be satisfied with satisfaction.” “He uses bold graphics, huge type, and lots of lists like ‘The 12.5 Principles of Customer Service.’ One of his principles is: ‘Your customer is your paycheck.’ Another is: ‘Customers call, contact, or visit for one reason — they want help.’ It’s pretty good advice, I think, and it’s fun to read,” Murray says.

Books as training tools

Another book that Murray recommends is *The Big Book of Customer Service Training Games* by Peggy Carlaw and Vasudha K. Deming. “It’s

a delivery method for training,” Murray says.

“But instead of CSRs writing down and trying to memorize something like the five voice qualities — tone, inflection, pitch, rate, and volume — the book offers a game or exercise to aid in remembering them. Someone from the group chooses a quality and then impersonates that quality, and the others have to guess which vocal quality it is. Reps are going to retain a lot more from that simple game than if they simply wrote the qualities down in a notebook.”

Another book that might be useful as a self-development or training tool is *Branded Customer Service* by Janelle Barlow and Paul Stewart. “It emphasizes the fact that frontline customer service reps have a huge impact on how customers perceive the brand,” says Murray. “You can spend a million dollars on ads, but if customers have a bad experience with a rep, there goes the brand. In essence, she’s saying to reps, ‘You are the brand.’ The book also offers some exercises — both for reps and for managers — for getting that message across. For instance: Ask yourself questions like, ‘Who is our brand?’ Then identify your brand as a man or a woman. How educated is your brand? Assign an age to your brand. And go into detail.

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