

## **The Power of Appreciation**

One of the most pressing questions facing companies today is whether or not they have the need and the infrastructure to support the little courtesies and pleasantries of good customer service that once were deemed essential and now are viewed as disruptive.

In our quest to turn every aspect of our operations into a profit center, including customer service, we have diminished the terms and conditions of our warranties, outsourced who speaks to our customers on our behalf, adopted deceptive marketing practices, and reduced our special offers to meaningless promotions of useless giveaways. Certainly we have all but abandoned all genuine demonstrations of appreciation – something Tudog sees as a significant error.

The lack of appreciation shown in business is not an indication of apathy or in response to the conclusion that showing gratitude is unnecessary, but rather proof that we have lost our respect for our customers and have become so arrogant that we believe they will remain our patrons regardless of how we behave toward them.

Some of the fault certainly falls on consumers who reacted without retribution when companies cut back on service. The lack of backlash for small reductions encouraged companies to further reduce their service expenses in small increments – leading to a cumulative disintegration of service.

The decline in service has not been as painless to business as we would like to believe. Although consumers did not respond with a buyer's revolution (since the decline was too gradual for them to ever get angry enough to react), they have answered the lack of corporate responsiveness with a dramatic decline in their loyalty. Today's consumers no longer reward brands that meet their expectations because they have been turned cynical by the grand decline in the notion that the customer is king. So although we believe the customer will still come in spite of our poor service, the great unknown is whether or not they come to us – or to our competitor.

As amazing as it all may seem, the trend away from loyalty can be reversed through the sincere and simple demonstration of appreciation. The consumer wants to feel supported and that you are reliable. He/she wants to feel served and appreciated. The simple use of "thank you" and the genuine display of gratitude will make the consumer feel you are dependent on his/her patronage. If you serve him/her well, he/she will reward you – by making you their brand of choice. Thank you is more than just polite, it's good business.