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## **Employee Behavior Can Help Or Hurt The Company Brand**

Have you ever experienced customer service or product quality that was so poor you couldn't help but wonder if the company was actually trying to turn you away as a customer?

We've all been in these situations. Unfortunately, I'm willing to bet that not many of us have actually done the company a favor and lodged a formal complaint. That would take time on our part and, without a guarantee that things would change, we question, "What's in it for us?"

But what if it was the company you worked for? Wouldn't you want to help ensure the business was performing at its best so that opportunities for job stability, growth and profits were improved?

Letting companies know whether employees are consistently thinking, speaking and *behaving* in ways that strengthen the customer experience tells them if employees not only understand and embrace the company's brand, but know how to deliver on the brand's promises through their actions. If they don't, then the company will be hard pressed to grow effectively.

Recently I was in Florida visiting a well-known restaurant chain that serves bagels. My family had ordered dinner, but I also wanted to take six bagels home. I went to the takeout line to place the order. While the sales clerk was packing the bagels, I noticed she was putting them into a large, expensive box suited for 12 to 24 bagels.

I said to her: "Please don't waste that costly box on my bagels—a smaller bag will do." Her response was appalling: "It's OK, I'm not paying for it."

Ouch! My immediate thought: "Well, I'm paying for it!"

Now, I'm fairly certain this attitude and behavior wasn't taught during the company's training and orientation session. But it clarifies the root cause of this imbalance between what the brand stands for and reality. Quite simply: Employees don't see themselves as a vital part of the company brand.

To fix this problem, we must realize that a company's brand is really no different than an employee. Because each employee has the opportunity to positively represent the company brand, the personality, relationships and actions he or she demonstrates can be

the most powerful way of encouraging customers to do business (or not do business) with you.

While shopping at a local supermarket chain, I was at a loss in finding the right aisle for apple juice. I stopped the first employee I could find to ask. Not only did she tell me where the juice was, she walked me right to it. This employee understands that her actions directly correlate to the company's brand.

As employees, we have a job to do and it starts with examining our behavior each time we walk in the door, make decisions, support co-workers and satisfy customers. We are the brand at work and have the potential to make or break a company. If we are behaving badly, then so is the company we work for.

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