

BUSINESS BEAT

Outside-in focuses on customer

By Andrea Testi
For the Enterprise

In these tough and challenging times, getting the customer experience right is even more critical. Small business owners need to put the customer at the center of their existence and earn their loyalty. This is called “outside-in” marketing, meaning that everything is focused on the customer.

When asked what differentiates their business from the competition’s, most business owners answer “great customer service.” However, few can say whether their definition of what that means is the same as their customer’s. They haven’t taken the time to look at service from their customer’s point of view. How do you know if having a flexible return policy or offering home delivery service is more important than frequent buyer discounts?

The best way to identify what is important to your customers is to ASK THEM. Talk, listen, and build a rapport with them.

While this might sound simple and fundamental, many businesses focus on the products or services offered, rather than providing solutions to their customer’s problems.

Listen carefully to what they say, get regular feedback to see how things are going, encourage and welcome suggestions about how you could



improve by providing methods that invite constructive criticism and comments.

To focus on your customers, you also need to treat your employees with respect and chances are they will have a higher regard for customers. They generally interact with customers on a different level than business owners and can provide a valuable perspective. Ask them to list the reasons they believe customers do business with you. Work as a team, brainstorm, and create a clear vision of what customer-driven service looks like in your business.

Personalize the experience of doing business with you – simple processing and service isn’t enough. Service has a feeling and customers want a compelling experience. They buy relationships and familiarity, and they want to be engaged and appreciated.

Try implementing a few of these customer service tips and track the results:

- Serve first, sell second – today’s customers are smarter, better informed and more intolerant of ‘being sold’ than ever before. They believe that you ‘earn and keep’ their business with service that is exceptional and personalized.

- Identify and anticipate needs. Customers don’t buy products or ser-

vices. They buy good feelings and solutions to problems.

- Give more than expected: What can you give customers that they cannot get elsewhere?

- What can you do to follow up and thank people even when they don’t buy?

- What can you give customers that is totally unexpected?

- Stay in touch – set up a customer management system to make sure current customers and previous customers are contacted on a regular basis.

Ongoing assessment and modification is key to having vibrancy in your customer service model. A true customer service focus can set your business apart from your competitors in a dramatic way.

When you understand specifically what customers want and work to provide just that; they will actively keep buying from you and provide those critical referrals that keep new customers coming into your business. You need to keep your customers happy by understanding specifically what they want.

The outside-in approach is guided by the belief that customer value creation, customer orientation and customer experiences are the keys to success for your small business.

Andrea Testi, director of the Treasure Valley Community College Small Business Development Center, can be reached at SBDC@tvcc.cc.

COMMENTARY



ON THE EDGE OF COMMON SENSE

By Baxter Black, DVM

Excuse him for talking ‘dirty’

In this column I have often mentioned scours, abscesses, big tits, bad bags, cancer eyes, foot rot, slurry pits, afterbirth, retained placenta, castration, heat cycles, sheep pellets and snotty noses.

Over the years I have received the occasional letter castigating me for talkin’ dirty.

It is never my intention to offend the sensibilities of my readers. My poems and stories are always written with the idea that people who read them regularly are livestock people. In real life I’m not comfortable cussing or telling blue stories in mixed company and I’m no different writin’ this column.

So, if I’m talking to a cattewoman, I assume she knows what bull semen is. That she has had scourin’ calves in her house and knows what it means when someone says it’s rainin’ like a cow peein’ on a flat rock. Those subjects are part of her lifestyle. I feel no need to ask her to leave if I’m doing a rectal exam on a cow.

Farm kids are the best example. They are what we have taught them and what they have experienced. Kids 15 years old who are learning to artificially inseminate learn the proper words for the anatomy involved. Uterus had never been a dirty word to them.

Children on a dairy farm learn to spot cows that are in heat. Washing the bag or tit dip does send them into fits of teenage giggling.

Helping a newborn get his first meal is not a titillating experience. Mucking out the horse barn is hard work but it’s not “ooky!”

All of us who spend our lives tending livestock are aware that our daily working vocabulary is not always proper amongst people from outside the real world. When the new preacher, who hails from Chicago, is introduced to us, we don’t immediately invite him to the oyster fry next Tuesday.

I would guess the people who are most conscious of this “cowboy vocabulary” are new spouses marrying into a livestock raising family. I’ll bet they could write a book!

So, to those of you sensitive folks who read my column with some reservations, or have neighbors who sit at your dinner table and talk about how to get cow manure stains out of a good shirt, I beg your indulgence. It’s not dirty to us, it’s just grass and water.

STATE NEWS

Oregon will get \$2.8 million out of Equifax data breach

By Claire Withycombe
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon will receive \$2.8 million as part of a settlement with the credit monitor Equifax after an enormous 2017 data breach affected nearly 1.8 million Oregonians.

The settlement, announced Monday, was between Equifax and 48 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

The agreement also settles ongoing investigations by the Federal Trade Commission and the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

About \$175 million of that is going to the states and territories, while up to \$425 million will go to redress consumers’ losses and for credit monitoring.

Equifax is also paying a \$100 million fine to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

The breach affected about 147 million people, compromising their Social Security numbers, birth dates, addresses, credit card numbers and for some, their driver’s license numbers.

“These self-described

‘stewards’ of our data turned out to be incredibly careless with Oregonians’ personal information and let down consumers — who had no choice about providing access to their data in the first place — in a big, big way,” Rosenblum said in a statement Monday.

Equifax is offering extended credit monitoring for those affected by the breach for 10 years, according to the state Justice Department.

Equifax denies “any wrongdoing whatsoever,” according to the settlement agreement, filed Monday in a U.S. District Court in Georgia.

But Rosenblum’s office said the breach “occurred because Equifax failed to implement an adequate security program to protect consumers’ highly sensitive personal information.”

“Despite knowing about a critical vulnerability in its software, Equifax failed to fully patch its systems,” Rosenblum said. “Equifax also failed to replace software that monitored the breached network for suspicious activity. As a result, the attackers penetrated

Equifax’s system and went unnoticed for 76 days.”

Oregonians and others affected by the breach will have access to a \$300 million fund to redress their losses through restitution and credit monitoring. If that amount is exhausted, up to another \$125 million will be available.

The company has agreed to beef up its security protocols in the future.

The \$2.8 million for Oregon goes to the Justice Department’s Consumer Education and Protection Account to help pay for the department’s work on behalf of the state’s consumers.

The breach, announced by Equifax in September 2017, prompted an outcry on Capitol Hill, where U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore., at the time the chair of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, made headlines for questioning the former Equifax CEO.

“How could a major U.S. company like Equifax, which holds the most sensitive and personal data on Americans, so let them down?” Walden said during the hearing in October

Oregon roadwork – by the numbers

By Claire Withycombe
Oregon Capital Bureau

The Oregon Department of Transportation is embarking on dozens of projects to fix up roads and other transportation infrastructure across the state this summer.

Paving work tends to ramp up in the summer, because workers need certain temperatures and conditions to pave.

It can’t be too hot, but it can’t be too cold, either, so that the asphalt sets properly and lasts as long as possible, said an agency spokeswoman.

The department does other construction work year-round, when weather allows.

All told, ODOT has 92 projects on its agenda this summer, from cleaning culverts to installing guardrails.

Some projects are being paid for with more than \$5 billion raised by a major transportation funding program approved by the Oregon Legislature two years ago.

Sometimes construction can interfere with travel plans, so before hitting the road to camp, hike or attend a rodeo, consider checking ODOT’s website, TripCheck.com, for information about possible delays on your route.

Here’s a rundown, by the numbers, that shows what the transportation department expects to undertake this summer, from Medford to Enterprise to Portland:

450: Miles paved. For perspective, Interstate 5 from border to border is 308 miles.

15: Miles of roadway repaired.

200: Miles of road chip sealed. Chip sealing is a process the agency uses to extend the useful life of a road before it has to be paved altogether.

780,000: Tons of asphalt the agency expects to use in paving and maintenance.

200,000: Share of that expected to be recycled pavement, which the agency says saves fuel, aggregate

sources, asphalt oil, and water.

314: Miles of rumble strips installed.

21,086: Pavement markers replaced.

14: Miles of guardrail maintained and fixed.

47: Miles of guardrail installed.

3,097: Culverts cleaned.

15: Miles of sidewalk built.

650: Ramps installed in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In Malheur County, projects including chip sealing on Highway 20 at Vale; paving and repairs on the Snake River bridges at Ontario; chip sealing between Cairo Junction and Love’s Truck Stop; paving and shoulder improvements in the Big Bend area south of Adrian.

For a look at the statewide map of projects, visit: <https://bit.ly/2SJA2K> online.

Claire Withycombe is a reporter for the Oregon Capital Bureau.

Drop them a line

STATE OF OREGON

Gov. Kate Brown (D) – 254 State Capitol, Salem OR 97310; Phone: 503-378-3111; www.governor.state.or.us/governor.html.

State Rep. Lynn Findley (R-Vale, District 60) – Room H-475, State Capitol, 900 Court St. N.E., Salem OR 97301; email: Rep.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov; 503-986-1460.

State Sen. Cliff Bentz (R- Ontario, District 30) – 900 Court St NE, S-301, Salem OR 97301; PO Box 1027, Ontario, OR 97914; Email: Sen.Cliff-Bentz@oregonlegislature.gov; 541-889-8866.

FEDERAL

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden (R-2nd District) – 2185 Rayburn House Office Bldg., Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-225-6730.

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D) – 313 Hart Senate Office Bldg., Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-3753.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (D) – 221 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg., Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-5244.

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