

“FABLED SERVICE” HOW NORDSTROM WINS THE WAR FOR CUSTOMERS

By Mark Bowser

Joy was in the air. It was Christmas time. That special time of the year when we sing, fellowship, and of course shop. Reverend Carolyn Crawford was no different. She walked into a Nordstrom Department Store and was immediately bombarded with the sights and sounds of Christmas. The store was beautifully decorated with all the Christmas trimmings. The air was filled with the sweet aroma of perfume and potpourri. And of course the glorious sounds of Christmas music emanating from a gorgeous piano. Everything seemed almost perfect.

About this time, a homeless bag lady walked into the store. Her appearance was haggard, dirty, and sloppy. Her aroma definitely contrasted to the smells of the store. Reverend Crawford's heart went out to this desolate woman. She knew the bag lady was going to be thrown out of the store. What an attack that will be to this lady's already poor self-dignity. Reverend Crawford decided to follow the bag lady. Maybe she can help save the bag lady some dignity when security asks her to leave.

The bag lady walked up to a clerk and asked to try on some evening dresses. Gown after gown was brought in for the bag lady to try on. The clerk complimented her on which gowns flattered her figure. Every warmth and kindness was given to the bag lady as if she were a real customer. She couldn't afford any of those dresses. Was the clerk out of touch with reality? After the bag lady left the store, Reverend Crawford, out of curiosity, had to know why this clerk handled this situation in this manner. She walked up to the clerk and asked, "Why did you treat that lady as if she were a real customer? She couldn't afford any of those dresses!" The clerk looked at the reverend with a gentle demeanor on her face and said, "This is what we are here for: to serve and to be kind."par This story is found in a wonderful book by Betsy Sanders titled *Fabled Service*. This book is about serving the customer. What does it take to make a customer happy? Betsy Sanders knows. As a former vice president with Nordstrom she knows it is *to serve and to be kind*. But what does that really mean? In order to discover this, I want you to do something for me. Bend down and take off your shoes. Go ahead, take them off. Now look at your feet. What do you see? Suppose you had to take those feet of yours and put them in the customer's shoes. Now what do you see? What do you want as the customer? What would make you happy? Betsy Sanders says, "If the customer does not care about it, it is not service." Everything we do has to run through that filter. What are we doing that the customer doesn't care about. One of my pet peeves is the automated telephone system. You know what I am talking about. "If you have this situation then please press 1, if you have this situation then please press 2, etc..." So, you finally push a button and what does it do? It sends you to another menu. I hate these systems! Who are these systems designed to help – the customer or the company? ANSWER: THE COMPANY. "If the customer does not care about it, it is not service." I don't have a problem with a one menu driven system that gets you to the right department and then a live person but the multi-menu systems have to go.

My family owns a company in Indiana called the Bright Corp. If we were to call them during normal business hours, a live person would greet us. My father and uncle are adamant about this and they should be. They built that business on personal contact with the customer. Now, I am not against technology, I use the technology myself. However, the technology must be used to better serve the customers. So the two questions I leave you with today are: *What do your customers*

really want? and *What can you do to serve and to be kind?* Live the answers to these two questions and your organization will be well on its way of reaching that ever stretching plateau of *Fabled Service*.