

Politics and Business and Customer Service

In this election year with the ramped up rhetoric I am seeing more and more posts on social media and in the actual business where businesses and their employees are voicing their political beliefs for all to hear and see. I have noticed businesses with signs letting all know how they feel and have been in businesses where the discussion of politics was front and center without regard to who might be in the business. Posts on Facebook, Twitter and other sites have included more politics than normal.

Do you do this? Does it bother you when others do? As a business owner does what your employees espouse on their personal sites reflect on your business? What if they use their sites to promote both your business and their personal beliefs? What if they are only using their personal sites, but they are closely affiliated with your business? Where is the line between healthy discussion and blatant partisanship?

My first job was in the banking field and I still remember the lectures on how everything I did inside or outside of work reflected back on the bank. This came after I was out partying one weekend at the local club. Someone had told the bank officers I was a little too rowdy. Sometimes I would like to see rowdy again – but that is another discussion.

In most business courses they promote staying away from politics, religion and anything that might potentially offend a customer. Their rationale was that the customer was what made them successful, not their personal beliefs. Conversely, we all in a free country such as ours, have the right to express our views. It is what makes the United States so special.

My biggest client is a political advocacy group that is non partisan and doesn't support candidates, however, they do take positions on various legislation and policy and rules that might concern their region. Even though I am careful to keep my remarks away from my main business by virtue of my being the owner any remarks I make whether on behalf of a client or not have a certain amount of cross pollination between by business and those I represent. I have always assumed this as part of the risk of being a consultant and working with many different clients.

I know, I personally have chosen not to do business with at least one company because of their over the top political rhetoric and have had a discussion with at least one other owner about some of their employees outspoken views. I have also counseled clients to be very careful about expressing their personal views in conjunction with their business unless the business itself has that focus.

In today's market I would hope that we all realize that customer's are hard to come by and do everything we can not to offend them. Today everyone might agree with your views, but we all know how quickly that can change and tomorrow you may be looking for customers again.

I'm not sure of the answer and I believe it is up to each business owner to set their own standards. I just know that I am going to be much more aware of what I put on social media and what I discuss when I don't know the beliefs of the other person.

Hopefully, this article gave you something to think about and maybe will lead to a discussion in the work place on how this applies to customer service and what standards you are going to set for yourself. We all know it is less expensive to retain a customer than to get a new one. That fact alone warrants discussion on this issue.