



The Black Hole of Customer Service

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Recently I was trying to find the contact information for a person I wanted to send an invitation to for a special event in our area. This person had been recommended by others to invite, but they did not have contact information.

I went to the website to get the information and I found one of those fill in the blank forms that go to some unknown address in E-mail land. You know the ones that say, "We don't contact you, us" and they never will contact you, us" and they never wasn't a list of the employees or their main contact information on the site. A long distance call was required to secure the information and then only after going through the black hole of telephone automated answering systems.



I discussed this with some of my colleagues and got various reactions. Some said that as a business person you had to protect your time or you would be fielding E-mails and calls all day long and get nothing done. Names should be protected from the possibility of scams, sales people and complainers, besides everyone does this for efficiency. Others said the information should be out there for all to see.

My thoughts – why be in business if you are going to avoid people? If I had my way every telephone would be answered by a real live person. By making it hard for potential customers to reach you, you are basically saying you are not interested. I'm aware of at least one business that it is virtually impossible to contact unless you walk in their door. Their phone system is automated and

"That is not a problem. I am happy to help."

messages left are not returned and if you can find an E-mail for anyone you probably won't get an answer either. However, you can buy stuff on their website!

I realize that efficiency is part of the process and I can appreciate saving costs where you can, but if you make it too hard for me to do business with you, I will find someone else. This is even truer of businesses in my community. I expect it from the big guys, but not from my neighborhood business.

Everyone is a potential customer –the salesman, the complainer, your current customer, the person just



wanting to invite you somewhere, and the person trying to get

information to make a decision. Once you start pre-determining who is important enough to talk to, you limit your potential sales. I have a friend who owns a large company that does business all over the country. His name as owner, his telephone number and his E-mail address are all on the website.



My office is in my home and my phone number and E-Mail are on my website and all correspondence including my E-mail replies have all the information. I risk getting calls on the weekends and evenings, but that is the price I am willing to pay to be in business.

What about you – what are your thoughts? Is it easy for people to do business with you? Do you need to review your policy a little?

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