



## **Satisfaction Guaranteed**

by Chanon Collins

As consumers, we are offered guarantees for products and services throughout our travels and shopping experiences. Guarantees illustrate a higher level of value for a product or service for the customer or client. Recognizing the power of guarantees for services and products is one of the driving forces for successful businesses. As business owners, it would behoove you to examine the potential return, both tangible and intangible, available through the use of guarantees.

Christopher W. Hart, Ph.D., author of *Extraordinary Guarantees*, examines the power behind these policies. Hart's text identifies the potential gains available in quality and customer satisfaction through the use of guarantees. When the proper guarantees are implemented, the customer begins to serve as quality control for your organization. Each customer would be, in essence, known as Inspector #9 – measuring and reporting on the efforts of your company. If you are saying to yourself that you don't want your customers measuring the efforts of your company, you should consider yourself fortunate to have any customers. Without gratified clients, businesses could not open their doors.

An efficacious guarantee provides a statement as to the way a company operates. It places a value on the service or product offered by your organization. While the presence of guarantees illustrates confidence in the offering, the absence of any guarantees speaks volumes. Dr. Hart found that most companies without guarantees did not offer them due to ill-perceived risks. Some of these fears were valid, but with properly prepared and implemented guarantees, the risks are drastically diminished. Those companies that experienced negative responses from their guarantees had poor quality and workmanship before the guarantees were put into place.

This leads to the actual power of the guarantee. A strong and serviceable guarantee will impact quality, service, value, team spirit, and the work ethic of your organization. When a company implements an extraordinary guarantee, the team must rise to the occasion. Every single employee of Land's End takes to heart their pledge for

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customer service – “Guaranteed. Period.” Their guarantee is simply stated and enforced in every single activity with each customer.

Dr. Hart also found that companies had become inventive in the ways in which they honored their guarantees. The insurance company, Empire of America, offers a unique guarantee to any customer who waits in line for more than 5 minutes – lunch is on Empire. The First Union National Bank of Charlotte, North Carolina sends roses to any customer who finds an error in their bank statements. The creative offers in honoring guarantees illustrates that guarantees do not have to focus on a refund of cash. Establishing goodwill and loyal customers should be one of the goals for implementing extraordinary guarantees.

Guarantees cannot be developed overnight – planning and testing is essential. Dr. Hart’s text explains, in depth, the steps necessary for developing and implementing guarantees – from establishing the evaluation format and selecting the type of guarantee to determining the payout and setting limits.

Tested and serviceable guarantees will provide greater value to your customers, as you and your team will strive to excel in all areas to achieve the goal of stellar customer service. No one wants to be viewed as the weak link in the chain of gratifying customers. With the proper mindset, guarantees will serve as a useful tool in developing and maintaining loyal customers – for “to the man who only has a hammer in the toolkit, every problem looks like a nail.”  
–Abraham Maslow

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