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Create Employee Manuals

Training employees costs time and money. Businesses can combat training problems by creating how-to manuals that describe and clarify job duties, according to a recent article, "Give Employees the Details," in Irrigator Tech's newsletter. A detailed job procedures manual provides a quick way to reduce employee training costs, the article said. Suggestions included: Assign staff to prepare their own manuals as though they must teach a new employee their job. Include step-by-step instructions. Note all necessary tasks, no matter how minor. Upon completion, ask supervisors to review the manuals and follow the steps to ensure detailed accuracy for the intended job. Supervisors can add missing details and determine if employees are performing unnecessary work.

Creating training manuals enables businesses to reduce costs and increase employee efficiency, according to the article. This exercise also decreases work disruption if an employee leaves unexpectedly or becomes seriously ill.

Put Plant Brands on Plans

Backyard projects often begin with planting plans and usually include lists of branded products, yet designers and installers often leave plant brands off their estimates, said Katharine Rudnyk, specialty accounts manager for Monrovia, in a recent Association of Professional Landscape Designers newsletter. Rudnyk offered several reasons for designers and installers to list plant brands with all other branded purchases for a project. Consumers display brand loyalty. Sharing brand preference with preferred distributors, growers and clients is good for business. By suggesting a brand, designers and installers encourage growers to continue producing quality plants. Designers save estimators time and money during the plant-procurement process by allowing estimators to make better purchasing decisions and consolidate with one grower.

Master Information Strategies

In light of the recession, consumers do not want impulse purchases, according to John Stanley, owner of John Stanley Associates, in a recent article, "The End of Impulse," that appeared in Western Nursery & Landscape Association's e-Newsletter. Stanley recommended that retailers reconsider their information strategies to maximize sales. His suggestions included: Create a signage strategy. Tell customers three benefits of a product and its price. Accept that consumers want to know about the manufacturer, not the seller. Incorporate information about providers near the product. Place information leaflets near products. Because we are in the information age, retailers might need to provide YouTube and other online links for product information. Include more education and product benefits in displays. Tell the story of why customers need the product(s). Join the social media conversation. When customers communicate via social media, research indicates that sales go up.

Make Customer Visits Positive

Shoppers often recall customer service details more than the products they purchased, according to Sydney Barrows, a professional speaker, business consultant and columnist who writes about the Customer Experience on Entrepreneur.com. In a recent column, Barrows said the little details customers notice and that make them feel good about buying from you represents a significant part of the customer experience. Barrows recommended six tips to provide exceptional customer service and boost customer loyalty. **Attentiveness** – Notice and act on information from customers. **Recognition** – Greet customers by name, and make an effort to identify them. **Personalization** – Remember customers' preferences and cater to these when customers return. **Consideration** – Go the extra mile by walking customers to the door and paying attention to details. **Appreciation** – Show customers and clients their value by holding special events and sending special invitations, thank you notes and tokens of appreciation. **Delight** – Do something special for customers when appropriate, such as offering special treats and contests, or just make them laugh.

Send Us Your Ideas!

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