



**BY PHIL SASSO**  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Phil Sasso is president of Sasso Marketing Inc. (sassomarketing.com), a technical marketing agency specializing in tools and equipment. Subscribe to his free marketing tips at [philsasso.com/blog](http://philsasso.com/blog)

# Are you giving your customers more than lip service?

Sales expert Jeffrey Gitomer talks about customer service and loyalty.

How do you define or measure customer service?

Good listening? Having answers? Being friendly? Quick interactions?

Recently, I interviewed best-selling sales author Jeffrey Gitomer for the premiere edition of my Driven Selling Podcast.

Gitomer is an author, speaker and trainer. He wrote the best-selling sales book of all time, *Little Red Book of Selling* (it's sold more than 500,000 copies) and more than a dozen other titles. I'm a big fan of his work.

I talked to him about his views on customer service and loyalty.

**Q.** How do you define customer service?

**A.** According to Gitomer it's all about one thing: helping.

I agree. You can be friendly, quick and a good listener, but none of that matters if you don't actually help your customer.

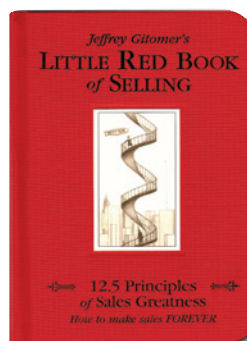
I'm sure you've been there. You've waited on hold listening to an annoyingly upbeat generic tune for what seems like an hour, then the overly-friendly "Customer Care Representative" listens carefully to your long and involved story and promptly informs, "You've reached the wrong department. Please hold..."

The flip side is when you, as a tool dealer, have to deal with a demanding customer.

"Most of the time when the



Sales expert and best-selling author Jeffrey Gitomer.



Jeffrey Gitomer's book, *Little Red Book of Selling*, has sold more than 500,000 copies.

they're in service or in sales, they don't want to hear it. They don't want to hear a customer griping. It's like it interrupts their day."

You get the point.

If you're in sales, you're also in customer service. And this is the whole purpose of your day. It's what you get paid to do: help customers.

Think of this bad experience as a chance to set things right and earn more future business.

**Q.** How do you suggest I deal with an angry customer?

**A.** You could light the customer's fuse and watch them blow up by asking them "What's the problem?" then stare at them unresponsively.

Or you can turn things around simply by saying something unexpected and proactive like "This is great. This is my favorite problem and I'm the perfect person ... to help you," says Gitomer.

"Now think about that for just a second, because what kind of a tone does that set? You've completely diffused an angry customer, correct?" says Gitomer. "But most people, whether

**Q.** How can a bad experience increase my sales?

**A.** It's not the bad experience that will grow sales. It's the way you turn around the bad experience. Mistakes happen. It's part of life and part of business. The difference is how you resolve the problem.

"Recovery is way more powerful than service," says Gitomer.

"Two kinds of animals never forget, elephants and customers," says Gitomer, referring to a bit he was recording in his studio the afternoon I interviewed him. "You might take it as a negative but it's not, it's both. They never forget the positive, and they never forget the negative. And they're telling everybody."

**More online**  
Read more about Phil Sasso's interview with sales author Jeffrey Gitomer online.  
[VehicleServicePros.com/12229499](http://VehicleServicePros.com/12229499)

“Do I want to be known as the best salesperson in the community or the best service person in the community?” asks Gitomer. “If I’m known as the best service person I’ll make sales. People will come and buy from me if they want my service.”

**Q. How do you measure customer satisfaction?**

**A.** I’ll let the title of one of Gitomer’s best-selling books answer that: *Customer Satisfaction is Worthless, Customer Loyalty is Priceless: How to Make Customers Love You, Keep them Coming Back, and Tell Everyone They Know.*

**Q. Can I measure loyalty?**

**A.** Gitomer uses two questions to determine customer loyalty:

- Will you do business with me again?
- Will you refer me to someone else?

Why the referral question? “Because that tells me I’ve done everything right,” says Gitomer. “That tells me that you’re going out and willing to risk a friendship or a relationship that you have with someone else and trust them to me.”

It’s not about satisfaction. It’s about loyalty.

That doesn’t mean you don’t care if your customers are satisfied. It is usually one of the markers on the road to loyalty for most customers. But Gitomer believes loyalty trumps satisfaction – “times one billion.”

“Maybe you have to be satisfied to get to loyal, but many are not,” says Gitomer. “Many people go to a dry cleaner and they hate the dry cleaner and they talk crap about them but they go back. Many people have a lousy experience at a car dealership

in the service department, when the car’s not ready at 5 PM but they go back. Many people get late deliveries from a vendor and they call up and [complain] about it but then they go back. So, satisfaction is an erroneous, bogus measurement. There are lots of people that will never be satisfied but continue to do business with you. Those people are referred to as loyal.”

**Q. How do I earn loyalty?**

**A.** “To get loyalty, you must give loyalty,” Gitomer writes in his book *The Patterson Principles of Selling.*

Gitomer gives a real world example of loyalty as a two-way street from his own experience:

“I own a Lexus. My dealer is HendrickLexusCharlotte.com,” says Gitomer. “The battery broke in my key. So, I was just happening to drive by their place with my spare key and my key with my dead battery and I went in. The service guy was there in the middle of the afternoon. I said, ‘Hey my battery’s dead.’ He said, ‘Come with me.’ So I go in and he shows me how to open up the thing and they take out a battery and puts the battery in. He turns around and hands me the thing. I said, ‘Great, what do I owe you?’ He goes, ‘Are you kidding me? Why would I charge you \$3 and lose a \$30,000 referral?’”

Simple, yet brilliant.

“I have been a loyal customer of theirs for 20 years,” says Gitomer. That’s the kind of loyalty to customers that you repay with loyalty back to the dealer. “You can’t buy that. I’m not going to go someplace else. That’s crazy.”

What are you doing as a tool dealer to earn your customers’ loyalty? **PD**



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