



Your Story MATTERS

Audrey Van Houweling, PMHNP
Columnist

The intersection between self-care and customer satisfaction

The towns of Sisters and Silverton, Oregon in which I practice rely heavily on tourism, their quaintness, and the promise to deliver the small-town experience so many seek out. Whether lodging or resorts, restaurants, retail, real estate, healthcare, education, or the latest and greatest coffee bar or brewery, the customer experience is essential to each community's success.

Customer satisfaction is a serious business these days. A customer's experience is made more visible than ever before with social media and rating platforms on Google, Yelp, Facebook, and more. Companies and entrepreneurs can rise or fall based on the feedback of a few. Dissatisfaction — some warranted and some maybe not — can tarnish a company's or individual's reputation in a way that can be hard to erase.

Competition can be ruthless. Competition can inspire innovation and modernization; however, for both emerging businesses trying to carve a niche or established businesses faced with the push for change, competition can be overwhelming, paralyzing, and may even compel dishonesty, bullying, and corruption. For those on top, maintaining that position can be both rewarding and exhausting. The pressure of holding onto one's status and reputation can be married to anxiety, fear, and burnout.

Perhaps not surprisingly, a large portion of my clientele work within customer

service industries and are contending with trying to find balance. They often feel stuck — wanting change, but worried about repercussions to their reputation, letting people down, or losing opportunities if they rock the boat.

Self-care may conjure images of meditation, a trip to the spa, green smoothies, or long walks on the beach. Self-care is not frivolity, but a privileged responsibility to put yourself in the best position to sustain your energy, talents, and gifts so that you may best share with others. When self-care is lacking, time can be mismanaged, energy can dwindle, tensions can grow, communication can be missed, and undoubtedly, there are impacts to customer satisfaction. The trickle-down effect of poor self-care can quickly turn into a downpour upon customer satisfaction and financial performance.

As I work with clients trying to navigate the complexities of practicing self-care amid business, family, and life demands, I challenge them to consider the following:

- What is your purpose? It is OK if the answer is "to pay the bills" as long as there is a worthwhile purpose to paying the bills. If you want to "get rich" — why? It is OK if work is the means to an end. You may have to take a minimum-wage job waiting for your chance to get ahead and that is OK. The problem is when a purpose becomes less and less clear — when you feel numb about your efforts — or when you cannot see the value in your day to day.

- What are your non-negotiables? What do you need in your life to thrive? Personally, while working with people is gratifying most days, my alone time is essential. Getting in a morning run, a good night's sleep, spiritual connection, long drives blasting my music, riding my horse, and brief escapes to the middle-of-nowhere sagebrush country all in their small ways restore my being and sustain my compassion. Can you build routines around your non-negotiables?

- Get acquainted with the word "NO." Saying

"yes" all the time might fatten your pride and make you feel like a superhero, but if you think you can please everybody, you will be disappointed, probably exhausted, and your superhero cape will fall off. Make "NO" your friend and yes, you can be honest. You don't need a sneaky excuse to set boundaries. People will get over it.

- Make room to shed the persona. It is natural to have our professional persona that we portray to the public, but our persona is likely a bit more appropriate, a bit more politically correct, and a bit more censored. Allowing the more uncensored, slightly inappropriate, and slightly less PC version of yourself freedom of expression from time to time can be cathartic.

- When in doubt, ask for help. Navigating demands and finding some sort of balance can be easier said than done and there will be seasons when it can seem downright impossible. Asking for professional help is a worthwhile investment for yourself and business ventures.

Whether you are a solo entrepreneur or part of a larger company, honoring your self-care and recognizing the impacts on your professional and financial performance is critical. Your customers may have to wait on your vacation, yoga class, or golf game, but as you fill your tank, they will ultimately reap the benefits.

Commentary...

Homeowners must take lead on their wildfire security

By Doug Green
Guest Columnist

Homeowners can and must take primary responsibility for wildfire safety actions around their home. According to fire science research, individual efforts do make a difference even in the face of a wildfire.

The Firewise Communities Program provides homeowners with simple and easy steps to help reduce a home's wildfire risk by preparing ahead of a wildfire. These steps are rooted in principles based on solid fire science research into how homes ignite. The research comes from the world's leading fire experts and research organizations whose experiments, models, and data collection are based on some of the country's worst wildland fire disasters.

Sisters Country has nine Firewise communities at this time, with two more to be certified shortly. The Sisters-Camp Sherman Fire District works closely with Project Wildfire in helping interested communities

go through the steps necessary to become a Firewise community. Becoming a Firewise community not only makes your neighborhood more wildfire resilient, but also opens up opportunities for possible grants to help with the cost of mitigation projects. In addition, in the future there may be decreased insurance rates for homeowners in Firewise communities.

When it comes to wildfire risk, it is not a geographical location, but a set of conditions that determine the home's ignition potential in any community. Wildfire behavior is influenced by three main factors: topography (lie of the land), weather (wind speed, relative humidity and ambient temperature) and fuel (vegetation and man-made structures). In the event of extreme wildfire behavior, extreme weather conditions are normally present, like extended drought, high winds, low humidity and high temperatures, coupled with excess fuel

See FIREWISE on page 24

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