

Serving Customers Well Without Caving In



West of the
River Chamber
Agawam • West Springfield

**Annual Meeting Keynote Address
by Drew Crandall
June 15, 2017**

5 decades of memories!

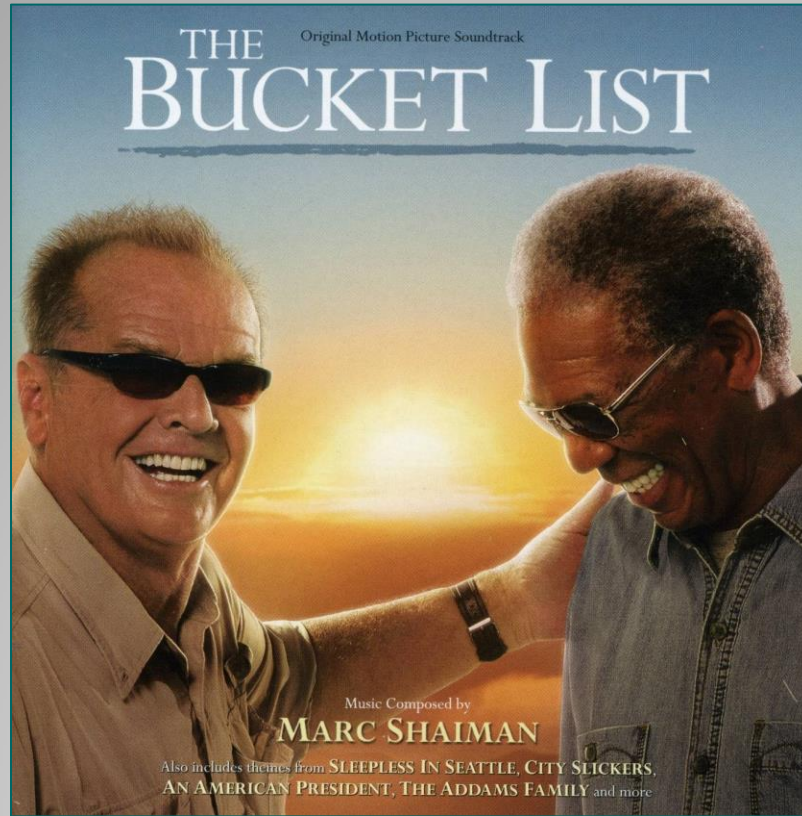
Since my family moved to northern CT in 1967:

- Drum corps competitions at Riverside Park.
- Senior prom at Chez Josef.
- Riverside Park/Six Flags (remember the Rotor and demolition derby?)
- Singing Christmas Tree at Bethany Assembly of God
- Fine German dining at the Hofbrauhaus.
- Penfield Productions assistance with GE AV projects.
- Able Machine Tool Sales launch in 1987.

- Some consulting work for Longview Fibre.
- Client displays at EASTEC (informal “best of show”)
- Home shows at Big E (my kitchen thanks you!)
- Equine Affaire and Fantasia with my family.
- Big E with family and friends (of course!)
- Nephew’s wedding at Storrowtown.
- Recently published books via Abba Father Media.
- Looking to the future, I’m on the organizing team of a convention coming to the MassMutual Center across the River in February of 2018.



Thank you for this opportunity!



Inspirational, interesting and informative!

Sincere and smart!

Humble but not shy!

Bold, but sensitive!

His messages are very well prepared!

I wish I had his energy and enthusiasm!

Creative! Excellent illustrations!

Good value: Priced right!


Level-headed! Balanced!

Crisp! Direct! Easy to understand!

He politely challenges you to think!

Very professional to work with behind the scenes!

Passionate about life and the content of his messages!



Drew Crandall has spoken across the Northeast over 2,000 times. Please consider booking him for your upcoming event.

**More speaking is on
my personal “Bucket List!”**



- As I dive into my message, you don't *have* to take copious notes. A PDF file containing my slides is already posted on a special page on **KeepTouch.com** for free downloading until tomorrow afternoon.



**May I have your permission
to step out of the box?**

- I've been in B2C & B2B customer service since 1972 (45 years).
- I've been through Walt Disney World training in Orlando.
- My staff has received BBB awards for Superior Customer Service.
- I'm a certified soft skills group coach and trainer.
- I've served hundreds of customers and sold millions of dollars worth of products and services.

**THIS AIN'T
MY FIRST
RODEO**



- I've been heavily involved in the BBB for over 28 years; my business enjoys a consistent A+ rating with no complaints.
- The reality is, you may have the greatest product or service on earth, but if you don't excel in customer service, you'll fall short.
- **BUT, would you agree that there are limits?**



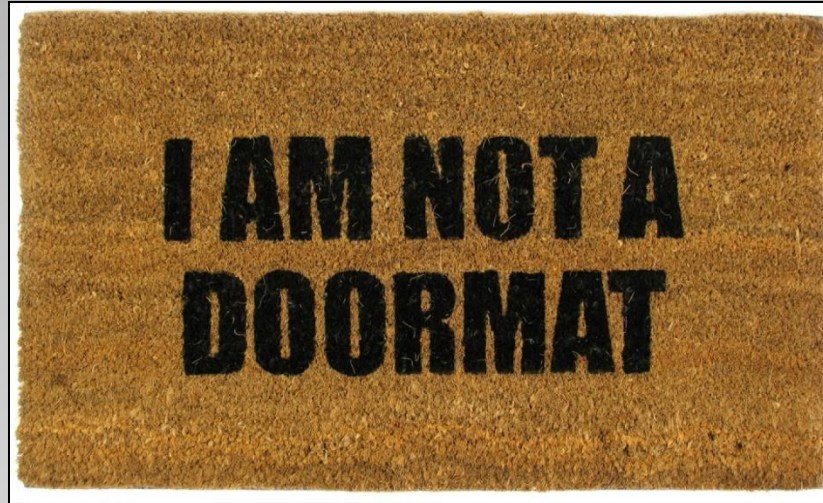
- Today, I'm going to cover a dimension of customer service that is rarely addressed. Some of you may bristle at some of the content, but overall, I think you'll find my comments LIBERATING.



...is a LIE!

What if I proclaimed today...

- Ladies, your husbands are **always** right.
- Gentlemen, your wives are **always** right.
- Employers, your employees are **always** right.
- Employees, your employers are **always** right.
- Of course not! **That's ridiculous!**
- No one is "always right."



- When embraced as truth, “the customer is always right” sets you and your staff up for manipulation and abuse by unreasonable customers.
- This mantra isn’t mentally or emotionally healthy as a framework for constructive, win-win business relationships.



- In practical reality, *every* business reaches a tipping point when, in your passion to provide excellent customer service, you cross the line and allow your company to be used and abused by unreasonable customers. By doing so, you actually enable and reward bad behavior.

Our culture seems to breed unreasonable customers!

- Our educational systems and media outlets do NOT do an effective job in educating the public about what it takes for you and me to open our doors each day and do what we do. The degree of business illiteracy is astounding!





- Contrary to popular perception, businesses do not have magical printing presses with which they can print more money whenever needed.



- In Israel, every young adult must serve in the armed forces. Through that experience, patriotism is high.
- In a way, every high school or college graduate should be required to start a business from scratch before he or she became an employee. Public appreciation for “business” would be much greater.

Here are some common ways in which you can be abused:

These may vary by type of business,
industry, or situation:

- **Price.**
- **Time.**
- **Product or service specifications.**
- **Strategic or tactical approaches.**
- **Ethics.**
- **Stress.**
- **Control.**



Here's an out-of-the-box word
that should exist in your vocabulary:



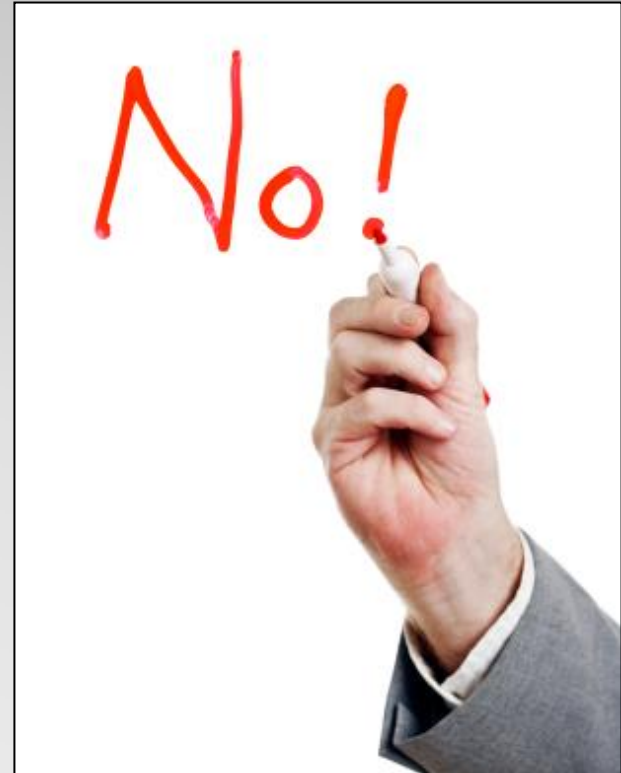
- How do you know when to go the extra mile and when to walk away?
- You have to make that judgment call on a case-by-case basis. It's not one size fits all.
- It IS possible to persevere with an unreasonable customer, finally come to an "understanding," and enjoy good, profitable future business. Other times, persevering just prolongs the agony and the inevitable.



- Sometimes, it is possible to persevere with an unreasonable customer, finally come to an “understanding,” and enjoy good, profitable future business.
- Other times, persevering just prolongs the agony and the inevitable. Some customers are impossible to please.

PRICE.

- Don't be a "wheeler-dealer." Maintain and preserve your integrity. Don't budge on your price without off-setting changes in product or service specifications.
- As an option, you can offer a menu of products or services at different price points.





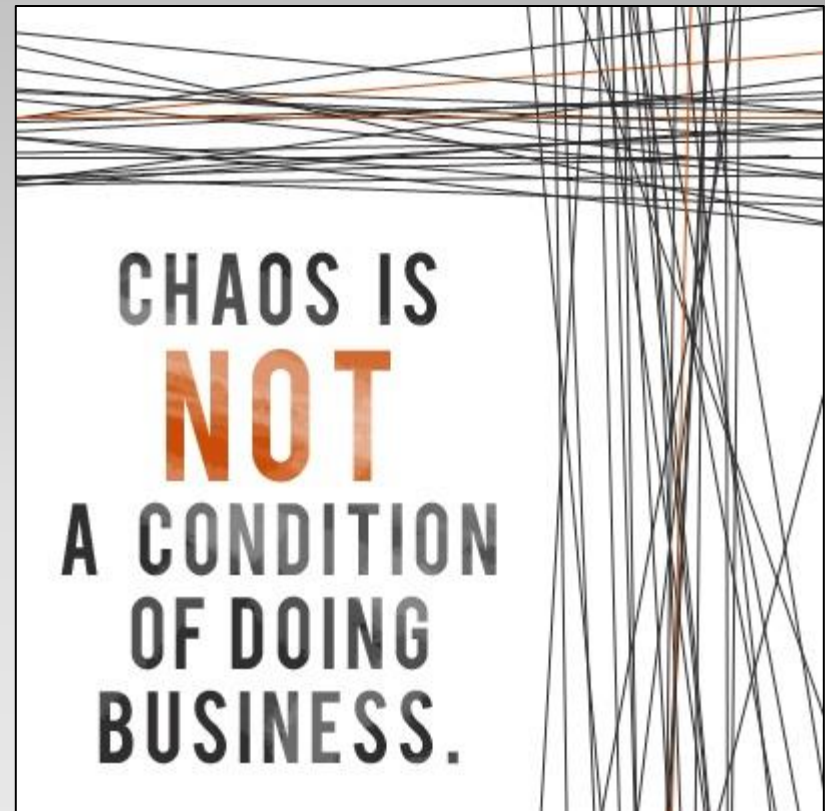
- If you cannot make a fair profit, why bother? You cannot ignore the three essentials of any business: revenue, profit, and cash flow. The numbers don't lie. If you know you're going to lose money, then it's foolish to continue.

TIME.

- Some customers are “time vampires.” Either they consume far more time than they’re worth (they often know it, it’s part of their Modus Operandus)...

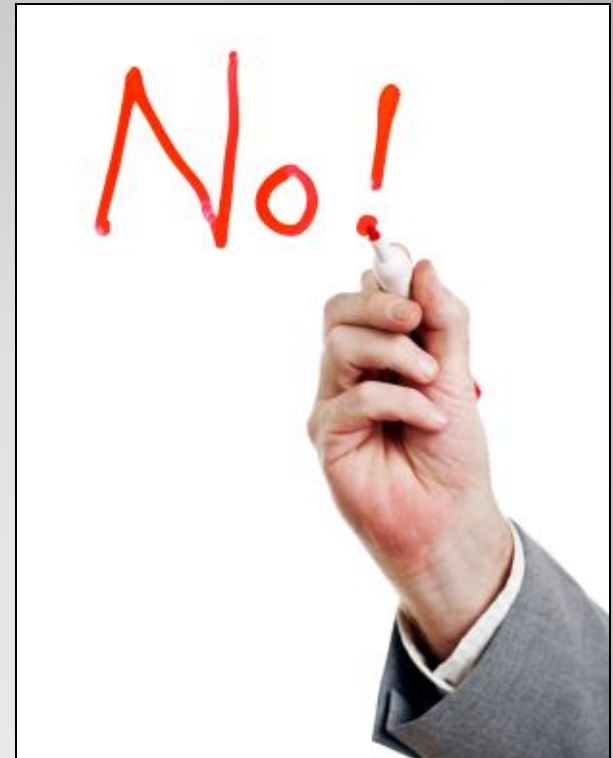


- ...or they're so disorganized that everything they do becomes a crisis; even if you scramble, work late, and go the extra mile, they won't pay you for it.



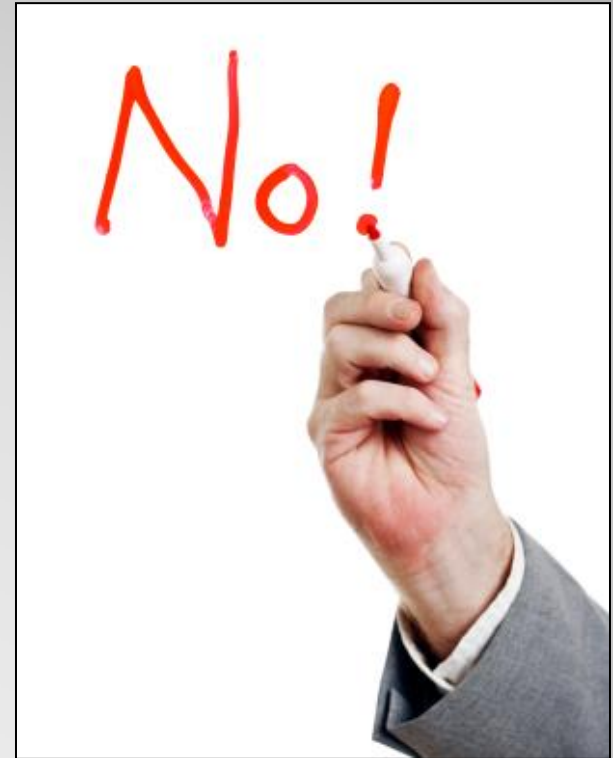
PRODUCT OR SERVICE SPECS.

- After the initial sale, the product or service specs change, become more complicated or more expensive, and you're "expected" to swallow them.



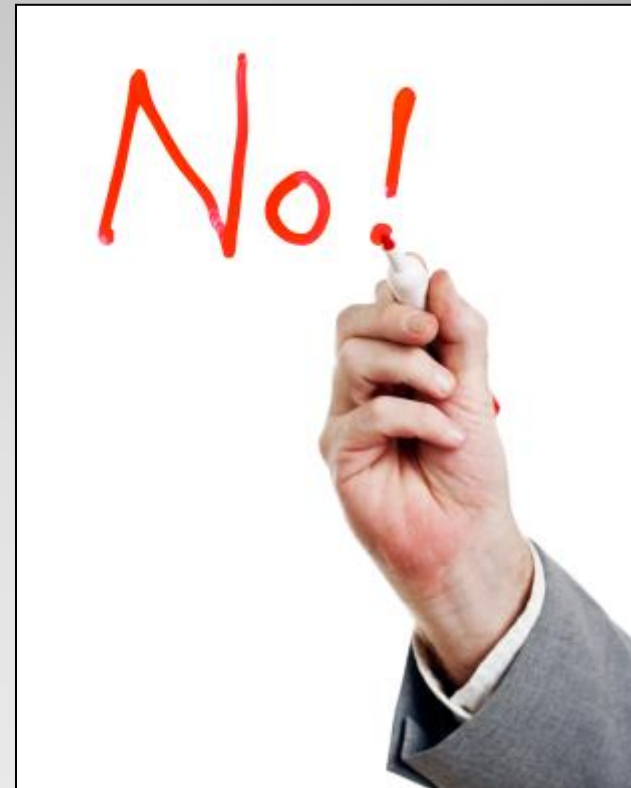
STRATEGIC OR TACTICAL APPROACHES.

- “Do what I say, or else.”
If pushback is appropriate, it should be proportional to the seriousness and scope of the demand and the strength of your convictions.



ETHICS.

- If your customer is enticing or pushing you to do something immoral or illegal to get or keep the business, hold your ground.

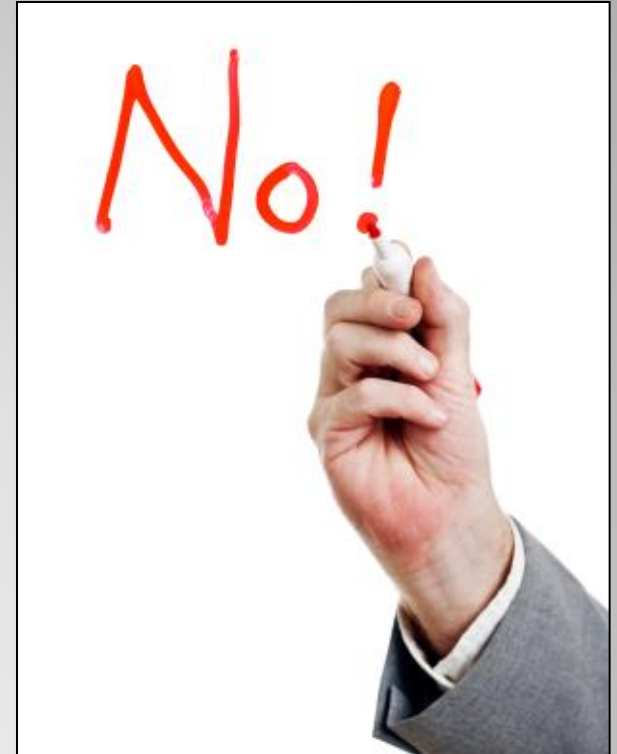


- Immoral and illegal business practices eventually catch up to a person and a business, with very painful and destructive consequences.
- The TV show “American Greed” does a good job of documenting this.



STRESS.

- Stress is hugely destructive to people emotionally, mentally, physically, financially and spiritually.
- If a customer infects you business with a consistently level of stress, then you should seriously think twice if you want to continue the relationship. How do you put a price tag on “peace?”

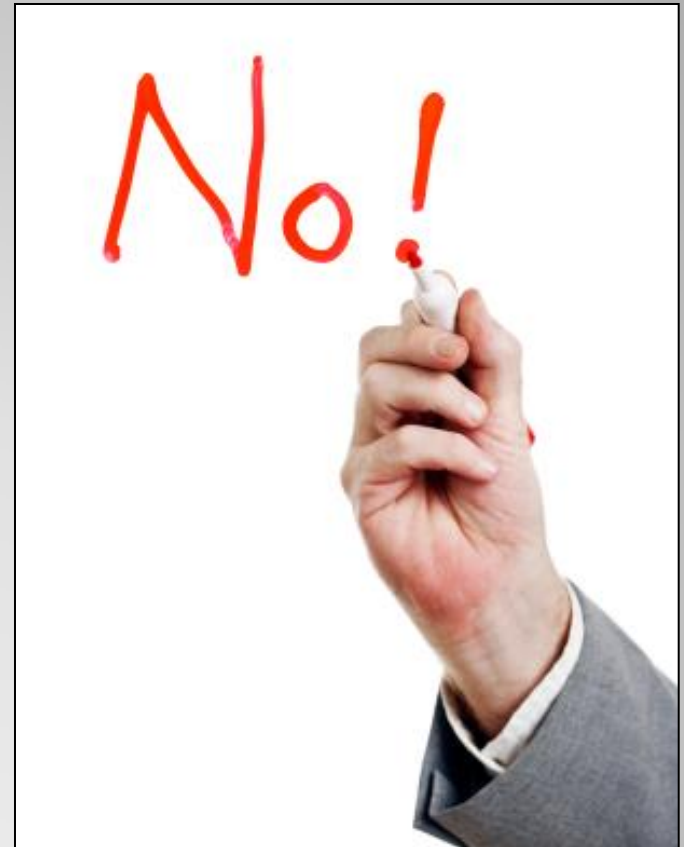


- If a customer infects you and your business with a consistently high level of stress, then you should seriously think twice about continuing the relationship.
- How do you put a price tag on “peace?”



CONTROL.

- Some customers want to intimidate, “own” and control you. It’s more like a master-slave relationship.



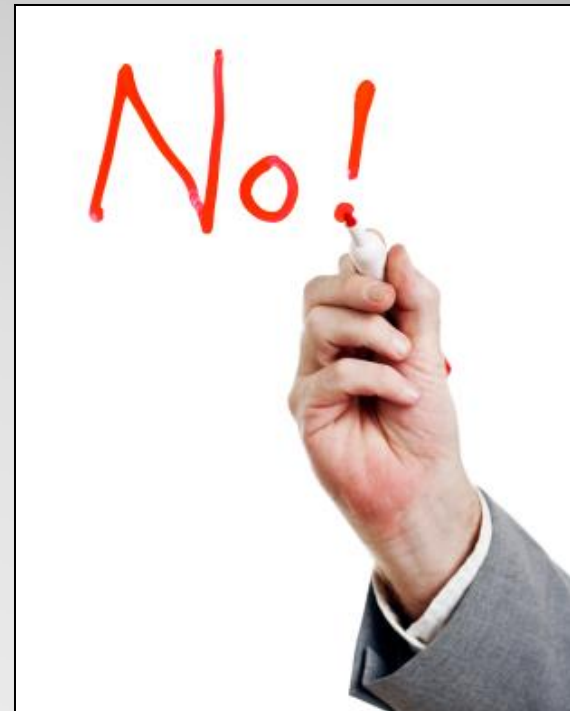
The Role of Technology in this whole conversation:



- The advent of 24/7 wired access and “cultural ADD.”
- The advent of massive and unfiltered expressions of opinions on social media.

DO YOU NEED TO BE ACCESSIBLE 24/7?

- You gave me permission to step out of the box, so I will.
- I realize that the answer to this question varies widely by the type of business, industry, and your goals. **In many instances, my answer is counter-cultural.**



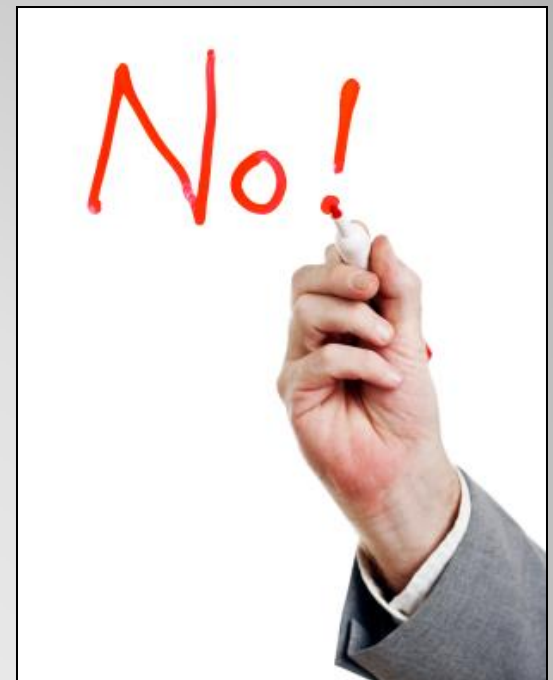


GOOD
Quality
OF LIFE

- If you're an owner or employer, you have to ask yourself: (1) is all of this 24/7 technology enhancing the quality of MY LIFE, and (2) is all of this 24/7 technology enhancing the quality of my employees' lives?
- Would it be smart to establish some reasonable boundaries?

DO YOU NEED TO RESPOND TO EVERY COMMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

- There's a lot of trash talking out there.
- "No good deed shall go unpunished."
- Short expressions of opinions rarely lay out the context for reality.
- There's little intelligent conversation about how things really work.
- With that said, customers use social media to vent and complain, so you need wisdom on how to respond.





- Instead of reacting on impulse, hit the pause button and think it through. Silence may be the best approach.
- Be mature in the midst of an immature culture. Take the higher road.
- If you sense the need to respond, remember that a soft answer turns away wrath. Don't fight fire with fire.

- If the online criticism or complaint is justified and you need to eat your slice of humble pie, then **eat it, learn from it, and move forward.**



- If the online criticism or complaint is unjustified, then give it time. This too shall pass. **Vindication does happen, but not on your timeline.**



- Encourage your prospects and customers to view and post consumer ratings and feedback on trusted websites that diligently SCREEN and VET what's posted vs. a free-for-all.

The screenshot displays the BBB Accredited Business Profile for Bertera Auto Group. The page is structured as follows:

- Header:** Includes the BBB logo with the tagline "Start With Trust", navigation links for "Central & Western Massachusetts and Northeastern Connecticut", and search fields for "Name" and "Category".
- Navigation:** A horizontal menu with options: "GET TO KNOW US", "GET INVOLVED", "GET CONSUMER HELP", "PROGRAMS & SERVICES", and "FOR BUSINESSES".
- Business Profile:**
 - Header:** "BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS PROFILE" and "Bertera Auto Group".
 - Buttons:** "Request a Quote" (orange) and "Select Language" (dropdown).
 - Menu:** "Overview" (selected), "Reviews & Complaints", "Request a Quote", and "BBB Accreditation".
- Main Content:**
 - Left Column:**
 - Bertera Auto Group** (44 years in business)
 - Headquarters:** 180 Westfield St, West Springfield, MA 01089-2508
 - Contact:** EMAIL, WEBSITE
 - Find a Location:** [Link]
 - History:** BBB File Opened: 10/03/1974, Business Started: 02/22/1973, Business Started Locally: 02/22/1973, Business Incorporated: 10/30/1997 in MA.
 - Type of Entity:** Partnership
 - Business Management:** Mr. Michael Bertera, Co-Owner; Mr. Steven Bertera, Co-Owner
 - Contact Information:** Mr. Jerome Ertandson, Internet Manager; Ms. Karen Gauthier, Billing; Mr. Razmik Ghazarian, Co-owner; Mr. John Inghilleri; Mr. John Lewis
 - Business Category:** Auto Dealers - New Cars
 - Products & Services:** According to information provided by the company, they offer sales of new and pre-owned automobiles and automobile repair and service.
 - Alternate Business Names:** Bertera Dodge Chrysler Jeep; Bertera Subaru
 - Middle Column:**
 - BBB Reason for Ratings:** BBB rating is based on 13 factors.
 - Image:** A hand holding a set of car keys.
 - BBB Reports On:** Licensing, Advertising Review, Government Actions, Out of Business, Misuse of Better Business Bureau Name/Logo, Bankruptcy, Mail Returned
 - Right Column:**
 - ACCREDITED BUSINESS:** BBB logo
 - Bertera Auto Group:** BBB ACCREDITED SINCE 04/23/2009
 - BBB Rating System:** A+ (with "Overview" link)
 - Customer Review Rating:** 3.33 (with "67%" positive and "33%" negative indicators)
 - Composite Score:** 4.12 out of 5 stars (with "A+" rating)
 - Buttons:** "REQUEST A QUOTE" (orange), "SUBMIT A REVIEW", "SUBMIT A COMPLAINT"
 - Share:** "Share" and "Print" icons

IN SUMMARY:

- By all means, pursue excellence in customer service.
- Remember that the customer is not always right. You don't have to cave in to unreasonable customers.
- You're in business to make a profit. Don't allow yourself to be beaten up for making a living.
- Life is short. There's more to life than "doing business." Don't allow our hyperactive, impatient, tech-centric culture to drive your customer service into a 24/7/365 treadmill.



The Key is BALANCE!



- Time for Q&A.
- Thanks again for the opportunity to speak this morning!

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