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Verizon Complaint Response Analysis

Having been a Verizon Wireless customer for three years, I have never been truly satisfied with my cellular phone service. While here in Bowling Green, my main source of communication among family and friends has been my cell phone. However, it seems that if I want to use my phone during the day or night, especially after 9:00 p.m., it constantly cuts out and the person I am talking to cannot always hear what I am saying. I realize that after 9:00 p.m. is when the service offers free minutes, but Bowling Green is not so large that Verizon cannot accommodate all their customers. I have to believe that there are much larger cities in this world than Bowling Green, which do not have this problem!

Several days before the complaint letter was to be turned in, I was talking with my sister who attends college in Dayton, OH. While on the phone with her for about 45 minutes, my cell phone had cut out four times. After about the third time, I became so frustrated that I decided to write my complaint letter to Verizon Wireless and see what their solution to this problem was. I also knew that my cell phone itself was not the problem because this was the third phone that I had in my three years as a customer, but rather it was in the service that Verizon was attempting to provide. After talking with several of my friends and telling them about the complaint letter that I was planning on writing, they all had many stories of their own about their dissatisfaction with the

Verizon Wireless company, so I knew that this would be even more evidence to prove my claim.

In writing my complaint letter to Verizon Wireless, I was seeking a few resolutions. First, I wanted them to offer me a free month of service, or at least some credit from my previous billing statements. After all, the Verizon employees can tell by looking at my call history the number of times that my phone has cut out, so it is very easy for me to prove that I am telling the truth. Another resolution that I was hoping for was that they would explain to me that they are in the process of fixing this problem and I will notice a difference within a few months. While, these resolutions were how I wanted the company to respond, it did not mirror what I expected them to do.

After I had sent my complaint out in the mail, I took a few minutes and thought about what I anticipated their response would be to my complaint. I took into consideration that they are a huge company that serves about 35 million customers and one measly complaint letter probably would not affect them too much. I expected to receive a generalized letter in the mail that was sent to all customers that complained, yet really did not completely address the complaint. However, as unsatisfied as I was with their service, their service recovery strategies exceeded my expectations.

Approximately two and a half weeks after I had sent the letter, I received a phone call early one Thursday morning from an employee of Verizon Wireless. His name was Rob and he was from the Office of Executive Relations. Rob was very friendly, mentioned that he had received my complaint letter, and he was currently working on finding a solution to my problem. He then went on to say that he would be contacting a service representative from the Bowling Green area to see if the problem lies in the

service area, the cellular phone tower, etc. Next, Rob explained to me that he would be getting back to me either by phone or in writing. Honestly, I was surprised enough by the personal phone call, and did not think that I would be hearing back from them again.

Once again, Verizon came through in a positive way with their response.

Less than a week after I had spoke on the phone with Rob, the Verizon Wireless representative, I received a letter in the mail from him. This letter was not just a generalized letter that was sent to all complaining customers, but rather it addressed my personal concerns and offered some long-term resolutions to my problem. He also apologized for my poor quality of service and provided me with a series of steps that would update my phone's roaming capabilities just by dialing a few numbers on my cell phone. Rob also regretted not offering me an immediate resolution to the problem, but ensured me that they were working on upgrading this area.

As a consumer, I was more than pleased with the firm's response to my complaint. I did not expect all of the personal attention that I received, since this company has millions of customers. Even though my service is not much better from when I originally wrote my complaint, I am very satisfied with Verizon's recognition of a loyal customer and also their recovery in my source of displeasure.

The three reasons why I feel that Verizon responded the way that they did correspond with what was discussed in our services marketing class. The first reason that I feel Verizon responded in the way that they did was because I was a loyal customer. Not only have I been a Verizon Wireless customer, but my family has three cellular phones under the same account. We have all been very loyal customers for three years, pay our bills on time, and spend over \$150 per month at their company. I think that when

the Verizon representative received my letter and looked up my account, he knew that I should be treated very well. Not only would he lose my business, but my entire family's business as well! I also feel that at a prestigious company like Verizon, they realize the outcomes of a loyal customer that they receive as a service provider. For example, the economic, customer action, and human resource benefits that I provide them with outweighs the amount of time it will take to keep me satisfied.

Another reason that Verizon may have responded the way they did is because their employees have been well trained in service recovery. It seems as if Verizon Wireless welcomes complaints and wants to know how they can improve their service. Due to the numerous cellular phone providers that are now becoming available, Verizon wants to stay on top of the competition. Verizon's slogan, "We never stop working for you", holds very true in my situation. Rob, the Verizon representative, assured me that they were taking the proper actions to get this problem fixed within the next year. Along the concept of service recovery, we discussed some trends in complaint resolution. This also is very relevant in my case because my letter was directed toward the manager, was about the quality of the service, and was handled by an employee in the Office of Executive Relations, which are all criteria in having a complaint acted upon.

My third reason why I think the company responded how they did is because their service did not fall into my zone of tolerance. In my letter, I made it very clear that the service they were providing me was not what I believed it should be. Since I was paying \$35 per month for one cell phone, I desired that this service would be of the highest quality the majority of the time and would provide me with a means for communicating with my family and friends. When I considered the level of service I would consider

adequate, Verizon had dropped below that threshold. I would have even accepted if the service had been efficient for 70% of the time, but that was not even holding true. I was becoming very frustrated and disappointed in their service, and I made that very apparent in my complaint letter.

When I look back at the influence of registering the complaint online, I do not think that it had an effect on their response. The reason that I feel this way is because I do not think that a large company like Verizon, who receives thousands of complaints, has the time to check if that particular complaint was registered online or not. Another reason may be that a company with 35 million customers serves their customers based on how loyal they are to the company. Like we discussed in class about the AT&T call loyalty center, I picture Verizon to operate very similar. For example, since I am a customer with several phones under one account and my family spends about \$150 per month, and then I received a phone call and a personalized letter. It is then possible that a customer who only spends \$20 a month total would only receive a generalized letter as a response to a complaint. These are some possibilities as to why registering the complaint online did not impact Verizon's response. I do think that Verizon was aware that the complaint was registered online; however I think that they would have taken the same action either way.

Even though my Verizon Wireless service has not drastically improved, I now look at the organization in a new way. Since their response was handled so efficiently and effectively, I plan to give them more time to fix this problem, instead of immediately switching service providers. After writing this complaint letter and receiving a positive response, I no longer just feel like a number within the millions of Verizon customers. I

feel like someone there does care about my satisfaction/dissatisfaction as a customer and not just about receiving my monthly payment.

My perspective on the statement, “The customer who complains is the firm’s friend” is that it should be every company’s policy. I think that companies learn from customers’ complaints about how they can improve their service. Also, in regards to that statement, when a customer complains, a company is made aware of a problem that they may not have known even existed. As in my complaint, Verizon may not have known that the Bowling Green area was having problems. This statement should be implemented for companies because it allows for more satisfied customers in the long run. I think that when customers complain, it makes them feel as if they have voiced their opinion and made a difference. Also, depending on how the company responds to the complaint, may keep a life-time and loyal customer. In my situation, Verizon’s response has made me think of them as a more prominent company that cares about their customers, and I will now give them a chance to prove that to me.

As I reflect upon this semester-long project, I have learned so much from this experience both personally and professionally. This was the first time that I had ever written a complaint letter, but I have previously complained to an organization verbally. I was surprised at how efficient Verizon was in responding to my complaint. I have to remember that all companies may not be that quick in taking action! Another concept that I have personally learned from writing this experience is to address the letter to management, make sure your complaints are very precise, and also be considerate. I have also learned to thank the companies for their help because it makes them more

willing to help you in the future and address your problem more promptly, which I did when I spoke to Rob over the phone.

Since I am a marketing and communications major, I am certain that I will be dealing with customer complaints in my job duties. After this experience, I have learned not to treat customers as a number, but rather as a real human being. By doing this, it allows the both the employee and customer to treat each other with more respect and compassion. Another concept that I will apply as I enter the business world is to offer a quick recovery time, apologize for my company's faults, and also offer a resolution to the problem. I feel that when a company offers a resolution to a complaint, it shows that they are willing to help fix the problem and not just copout with an apology. Overall, this experience has been very valuable for both my role as a customer and as a future employee handling customer complaints, which I will soon be fulfilling