

My son Ben took guitar lessons from David Crabbs at Ankeny Guitar Studio several years ago, but dropped them when other activities took priority. After daughter Katie and her family moved back to Ankeny, Ben was visiting them and found an old acoustic among the items they really didn't know what to do with. They agreed to give Ben the guitar when he asked. Since then he has played that old, dirty guitar quite religiously, re-learning the instrument.

A few Saturdays ago we were at a wedding and received the following text from Ben. He had been playing that old guitar when a string broke. He didn't know exactly where to go for a new string, but he remembered his guitar teacher from the past. Here is what he said:

"Dad, I think David Crabbs might have just written your next column for you. Talk about customer service. I called him up and he immediately remembered who I was. I asked if he had some guitar strings I could buy and he said he had some available for \$10 and he was available right then and there if I wanted to swing by and buy them. I walk in with my guitar and instead of just letting me buy them, he takes my guitar, replaces all the strings, cleans my guitar, helps fix up a few things, tunes it to the right pitch, does some other things I don't even know could be done to a guitar, and spends about 20 to 25 minutes more than he ever should have. I paid him \$15 instead for taking the time out of his day and for being so incredibly kind and helpful and going above and beyond what I asked of him."

A couple of thoughts crossed my mind when I read this. First I thought Ben might just write this column for me, as he promised he would write a guest column 6 years ago. Secondly, I was happy that he recognized what great customer service looked like, and finally I was happy that he was willing to pay something extra for that great customer service. Ben could have gone to Target or Walmart for the same item or even ordered them from Amazon, but he would not have received the same level of service he received from David.

David obviously has a love for the instrument and it shows in his lessons and the way he deals with his students, both past and present. David instinctively knows that guitar strings are not the only thing he sells. When David sold Ben the guitar strings and put them on, cleaned and tuned that old guitar, he sold what Target, Walmart and Amazon couldn't sell, outstanding local service. He didn't ask for any additional money for the service, but Ben gave what he could afford to the level of service he received. I think David was also very subtly nurturing the seeds for Ben's growing interest in playing the guitar. In turn Ben might just come back for additional lessons.

As owners and managers of small businesses, do the people that work with us have David's level of passion for our products, service and business? Just imagine what would happen to our sales and profits if they did! That is our challenge, to instill and deliver that passion every day to every customer.

When Ben goes off to college in a few weeks he will be even better at playing the guitar, and recognizing great customer service.

*Small Business Today is a bi-weekly feature written by Tom Friedman, market president of First National Bank, Ankeny.*