




Leading you to the T.O.P.

# The Franchisee FOCUS



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Success Handler, LLC  
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David Handler is founder of [Success Handler](http://www.successhandler.com), a professional business coaching organization. With him as your coach, you'll explore the business and personal dreams you desire. Much like sports coaches with athletes, David will show you how to soar to new heights as a franchisee, franchisor, small business owner or corporate executive.



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## A Perfect Picture by The Coach, David Handler

### Part II of II

*Last month, I shared how one company failed to recognize the importance of empowering employees to help customers. This month's article is about recovery when things don't go as planned. [Here's a link](#), in case you missed Part I.*

Upon discovering the biggest cable TV operator in the country doesn't appear to place high value on customer relationships, making the switch to satellite became an easy decision. It took 20 minutes of online research, a brief conversation with a friend who cut the cable a decade ago, and 30 minutes on the phone with a sales rep to finalize things. Wow! Why did I wait so long to do this?

Learning it would be 10 days for an opening on the installer's schedule did seem a bit long, but I never considered it a red flag. As the joyful rep explained, "The first few weeks of football season are always a busy time for us." Thoughts of watching every NFL game in HD made the time pass quickly. Of course, part of that could have been reminding myself that I'd soon be dropping off our cable boxes and saying, "Cancel our service." Unfortunately, as one who advocates the Law of Attraction, those revengeful ideas must have manifested bad karma, because on installation day I experienced such poor customer service that the cable company looked like Nordstrom.

The scheduled window was between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. No problem, I thought. They said it takes less than three hours, so even if

*"My friend thanked me for setting up the call between the two of you. He said he thought you were really helpful and had lots of great insights...which came as no surprise to me."*

- Ryan H, Texas

*"I thought the call this past Monday went very well. You are bringing much added-value to the group. Thank you."*

- Wayne O, Pennsylvania

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## Possibilities Explored™

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### Thinking Big

Doing things like everyone else isn't exactly a recipe for success. To learn how thinking big – and a little out of the ordinary – can lead to big results, read [last November's article](#).

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### If I Had A Hammer Taking A Stand

*"When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary..."*

Thus did our forefathers begin the Declaration of

the installer arrives at two, we'll still be OK for our evening plans. Naturally, he called at noon to say "the morning stop is taking longer than expected," and he would arrive in an hour. He called again at 2:00, asking for specific directions to our house. Finally, the knock on the front door came at 2:30, but he assured me we would be done by 5:00. Pulling out his work order, we reviewed the specifications. They were wrong.

Somewhere along the line, he said, it seems there was "miscommunication" about how many free boxes we were to receive. "They contract to us, and we often have these mistakes with them," he said. That's no big deal, I said, just let me call the satellite company. They'll straighten this out in a minute.

Who would have thought you can't speak to the person who took your order? In fact, you can't even get to that person's manager, because each randomly selected call center operates independently, and they can't transfer you. Which explains why my original order, taken in Arizona, was now being handled in North Carolina, and the response from the rep on the line was, "I'm sorry, sir, but what you're claiming isn't possible."

While at that moment I was tempted to send the installer away and reconcile myself to a life with cable, the satellite itch had overtaken my logic, so I asked to speak to a supervisor. Care to guess her initial response? "Sir, all I can tell you is nobody has that deal," she said. "I can't even get it myself, and I work here." Not the right response. "I don't care about what you can't get," I replied loudly. "I know exactly what I agreed to, and I have all my notes to prove it. If someone had sent me the e-mail I asked for in the beginning, we wouldn't even be having this discussion."

Over the next 15 minutes there was lots of finger-pointing, and not all of it was at me. "All I can say," she concluded, "is that our sales rep lied to you." Fine, I said, just make it right, give me what you promised, and we'll call it even. "I can't do that," is that last thing I remember her saying before I asked to speak to the head of the call center. And would you believe he came to the phone? In fact, he listened patiently to my story, and said, "We'll fix it. You're going to have exactly what you were told." How about that? After poor experiences with at least four people, finally someone was smart enough to see the big picture and think let's make this person happy.

[Out of respect for your time, I'm going to summarize the ensuing inconveniences that included: 1) Waiting nine more days for the second installer; 2) Spending another hour on the phone with yet

Independence. While such acts may seem lost in the past, a 75-year-old woman recently took a stand against what she perceived as unfair treatment by, yes, the same cable company that frustrated me.

Mona Shaw took a hammer to the local office in Manassas, VA, and promptly smashed the keyboard of a customer service rep.

"I turned to the blonde who had been there the previous Friday," she said, "the one who told me to wait for the manager, and I said, 'Now do I have your attention?'"

Without endorsing violence, I must admit to having smiled when I heard about Mona's seditious act. Having waited for two hours without assistance, she had the courage to do what many customers are thinking. Of course, she was also promptly arrested. Fitting this took place a few miles from our nation's capitol.

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another call center because there was nothing in the record about the gentleman in North Carolina having promised me anything; 3) Discovering we had no programming, and ending up paying \$10 more per month than expected; 4) Not having the NFL package when we switched on the TV that first Sunday, and, once that was resolved, being told it would cost another \$100 to have it in HD. The bottom line is everything eventually worked out as promised in the conversation with the first sales rep. After six weeks of satellite – and getting to watch Vince Young play every Sunday – we couldn't be happier.]

The lesson to learn from my cable/satellite journey is to start making things easy on your customers, instead of having them jump through hoops to do business with you. Think about your own experiences, and how often you receive the same worn out bureaucratic responses: "We can't do that..." "That's just the way it is..." "This is beyond my control..." I'm guessing you can come up with a lot more of those stories than ones about when you received more than you expected. Your company will stick out like a satellite dish on the front side of a house when customers hear: "Yes, we can fix that." Talk about a differentiator and competitive advantage!

You don't have to give away your "programming" for free to accomplish this either. It's the little things that will make a difference. Train your employees in kindness and listening skills. Coach them to probe to uncover the real reason behind customers' issues. Encourage each of them to create one wonderful customer experience every day. Think of how many that is over the course of a week, month and year.

I truly believe 99 out of 100 people won't take advantage of you. They will, however, spread the word about your incredible company. Will Rogers said; "Live in such a way that you would not be ashamed to sell your parrot to the town gossip." A modern day translation would be: "Run your business as if all your customer problems were broadcast on satellite." The big eye in the sky don't lie. Are you willing to accept the challenge?

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**Happy Thanksgiving**

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### **The Wonderful World Of Color**

Last month's travels took me to – believe it or not – Manassas, Virginia (see sidebar on "Hammer"). Following my presentation, I drove to Charleston, West Virginia for a client project.

While the Northeast has a deserving reputation for breathtaking Fall color, I have a hard time believing it can be any more spectacular than what I witnessed over the last 30 miles on I-81 leading to the West Virginia border. The mountains, leaves and skies were as beautiful as anything I've imagined. If you live in the area, give thanks for your blessings. If you're ever nearby in the Fall...

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