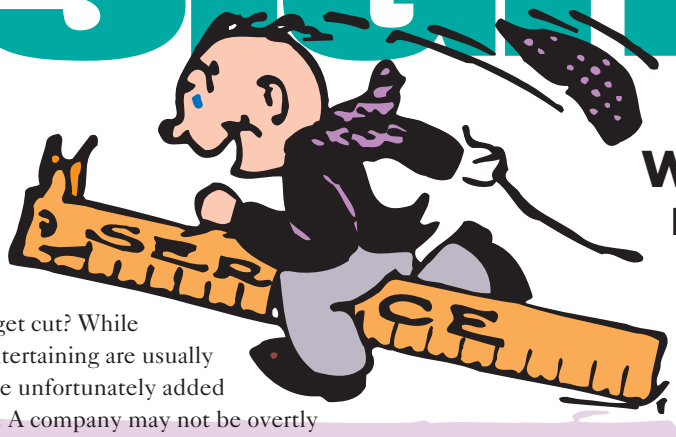
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INSIGHTS

Vol. XIV No. 3, March 2002

How's Your Customer Service?





Has it fallen victim to a recent budget cut? While travel, advertising, and elaborate entertaining are usually the first to go, some businesses have unfortunately added customer service to that list as well. A company may not be overtly cutting the customer service function from their budget, but a falloff in service levels has become an unexpected result of mass layoffs and trimmed spending.

Customer satisfaction levels are dropping. The American Customer Satisfaction Index, calculated by the University of Michigan Business School, dropped 1.2 percent in 2001, after rising throughout 2000. Executives are also noticing that their companies' efforts in customer service aren't where they were a year ago.

Adequately servicing customers can be difficult in budget-crunch times, but experts believe that companies can't lose sight of their responsibilities. Customers are the lifeblood of an organization, so no matter what budget cuts a company makes, it can never reduce its customer service initiatives. Especially during an economically challenging period, if a company sees its customer satisfaction levels slipping, then it is in big trouble. ■

Source: Sales & Marketing Management

When a Hen's in a Fowl Mood

When you're in a bad mood, you probably show it by looking angry and raising your voice. Chickens, on the other hand, send those messages inside their eggs.

According to the *Journal of Poultry Science*, if you find an egg with blood, or a brown spot in it, that's a sign that the hen was emotionally distressed. An egg with a pink shell isn't a sign of springtime—it's an indication that the hen was under very severe stress. ■

BJ's Knows... Our System is Their Solution

BJ's Wholesale Club, based in Natick, Massachusetts is the fastest-growing, membership warehouse club in the United States. With 135 clubs in the eastern United States, BJ's was looking to standardize their cleaning programs. Their goal was to combine standard equipment with a chemical delivery system that was safe, efficient, economical, and readily available throughout their chain. Happily, the "total package" they were looking for was spelled, CHEMSTATION!



After selecting the proper equipment, BJ's needed to find the right cleaning chemical to maintain the clubs' attractive appearance. ChemStation met BJ's criteria which included a blend to clean their special concrete floors; a containerless system that would eliminate receiving and container waste; a safe, fast-filling, worry-free, precise system to allow more floor scrubbing time and eliminate the job of handling and measuring out the chemicals by the machine operators; and, a national company that could serve their entire chain.

ChemStation New England is now proud to say, "Our System is Truly Their Solution." ■

Star-Spangled Banner

The national anthem of the United States was approved by an act of Congress on March 3, 1931 (National Anthem Day, March 3). The text was written by the American lawyer and poet, Francis Scott Key, on board a British frigate during the British bombardment of Fort McHenry in 1914. Key had boarded the ship under a flag of truce to arrange for the release of a prisoner held by the British during the War of 1812 and had been temporarily detained during the attack. The sight of the flag still flying on the following morning inspired Key to write the poem. First printed in a handbill and then in a Baltimore newspaper, it soon became a popular song, sung to the tune of the drinking song "To Anacreon in Heaven," which was attributed to the British composer John Stafford Smith. ■



March Madness

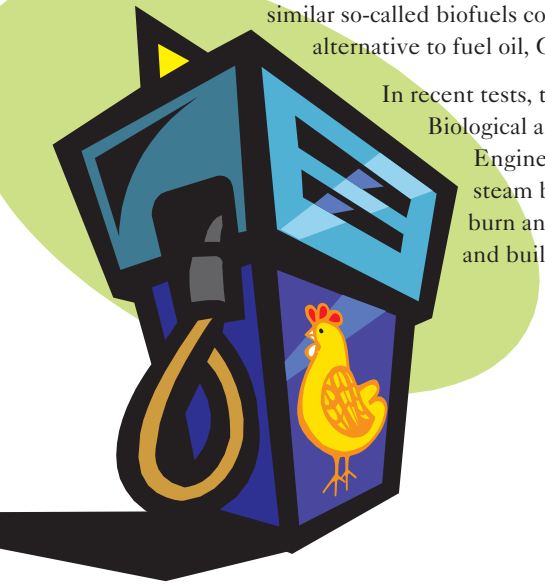
Along with the NCAA basketball festivities, there are other things being celebrated in March. National Anthem Day is March 3 (see Star-Spangled Banner) and March 12 is Girl Scout Day. On March 17, the Chicago River will turn green in honor of St. Patrick's Day and Christians will celebrate Easter on March 31. The National Pasta Association has designated March as National Noodle Month and the American Association of Aardvark Aficionados observe the second week in March as National Aardvark Week. It doesn't get any better than this! Have a great month!



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Alternative Fuel

At the University of Georgia, home to thousands of students raised on Southern fried chicken, chicken fat is being put to an unusual use – heating the campus. Officials say it's cheap, it's safe, and it doesn't make the town smell like a KFC. Chicken fat, restaurant grease, and similar so-called biofuels could become a good alternative to fuel oil, Georgia scientists say.



In recent tests, the Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering has used giant steam boilers (converted to burn animal fats) to heat water and buildings on campus. ■



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Insights Editor, ChemStation, 3400 Encrete Lane, Dayton OH 45439
Email: kdunlap@chemstation.com

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Soapbox

Success always occurs in private, and failure in full view.

Accordion, n. A bagpipe with pleats.

It takes 4.6 billion hours of paperwork for all Americans to file federal income taxes.

Whenever you find that you are on the side of the majority, it is time to reform. – *Mark Twain*

Apology, n. (1) The super glue of life which can repair almost any of our sins; (2) Saying the right thing after doing the wrong thing; (3) That lump in your throat caused by having to eat your own words.

He who laughs last didn't get the joke.

An intellectual is a man who takes more words than necessary to tell more than he knows. – *Dwight D. Eisenhower*

An intellectual snob is someone who can listen to the William Tell Overture and not think of The Lone Ranger. – *Dan Rather*

The wages of sin are unreported. – *Unknown*

Experience is the sinking feeling of knowing you're making the same mistake again.

Don't go around saying the world owes you a living. The world owes you nothing. It was here first. – *Mark Twain*

I don't have a solution, but I admire the problem.

Wise men talk because they have something to say; fools, because they have to say something. – *Plato*

Truth in Advertising: A sportsman's shop with a sign that reads "dead bait."

A celebrity is a person who works hard all his life to become well known, then wears dark glasses to avoid being recognized. – *Fred Allen*