

# The Success of Our Customers

**No** matter what business you're in, you need customers. More importantly, you need customers who can and want to pay for your goods or services. It's in our best interest to do everything we can to make sure our customers are successful with the products or services they buy from us, as I believe that our wages are paid not by our companies but by their customers.

This is true of any business—for publishers as well as gear manufacturers. For example, if an advertiser places an ad and forgets important information, like his phone number, it's more than being nice—it's good business—when I inform him that it would be wise to include it.

If the advertiser places an ad and he gets no response, whose fault is it? Does it matter? From my perspective, what matters is that he's not going to be successful with our magazine, and he's not likely to advertise again. What I want is more customers, not fewer, so if there's anything I can do to make him more successful, it's in my best interests to make sure he doesn't fail.

Sometimes it's easier to see these things when you're the customer. I've recently had an experience I'd like to share with you.

Not long ago we purchased a new computer for our office, directly from Micron Technology, Inc., one of America's largest mail order computer suppliers. We have several other Micron machines, and each of them has always performed well.

When this particular machine arrived, we found that for some reason it would not connect to our Novell network. We couldn't understand the reason, because every other machine we had ever bought, including our other Microns, attached to the network with no problem, right out of

the box. Of course, we consulted Micron, and they were extremely diligent in trying to help us solve our problem. They had us send the machine back to them, where they worked on it, swapped out some parts, and tested it.

However, when we received the machine back, it still didn't work. Micron continued to work with us to try to solve the problem, and eventually we were put in touch with one of their Novell-certified network engineers. He, too, was baffled. From what he told us, the machine was supposed to do what we wanted and needed, and there should be no reason why it would not work for us.

This went on for some time. Finally, I received a letter from Micron's "Office of the President," which informed me that Micron was washing its hands of the problem, that they were unable to support 3<sup>rd</sup> party software (which in our case meant Novell). Despite all the efforts of the customer service people and the engineers who tried to help us along the way, this one letter made me feel as though the company didn't care that their product wasn't doing what they or I expected it to do. I responded with a letter of my own, expressing these feelings and asking what I was supposed to do with the machine now. Was I just out of luck?

Micron has yet to respond. Right now, the machine is sitting in a corner of our office, back in its box, and it hasn't been touched for months.

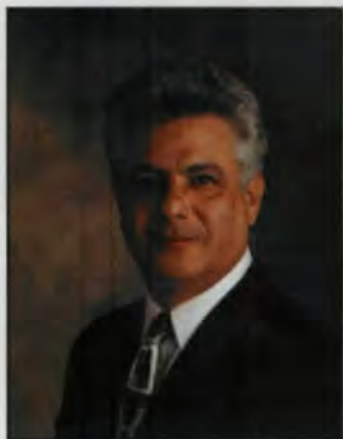
The really unfortunate thing is that except for the office of the president, Micron seems to have its act together. In fact, some of their sales literature sounds almost like I could have written it myself. The "About Micron" section of the company's Web page begins: "Micron Electronics is preparing for success. Your success." The section titled "Vision," ends with the statement "...ultimately, your suc-

cess is our success...and we want to win."

How is it, then, that I fell through the cracks?

It seems to me that it's an awful waste for Micron to have spent all that time and money trying to help me only to have their "Office of the President" decide that doing business with me wasn't worth their time anymore. With one decision, the company's management not only undid all the goodwill that its employees had worked so hard to build, but they've caused irreparable damage to a relationship with a customer who, under other circumstances, would have bought from them again.

I understand the concept of cutting your losses, of not throwing good money after bad. Perhaps there are mitigating circumstances about which I am unaware. All I know is that I have a computer that won't work for me, and I feel as though I've been let down. I wonder if Micron's employees feel the same way.



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