

As consumers we expect a standard of behavior, and most importantly appearance from professional service providers. Restaurants and department stores are often the target for customer service criticisms and we continually emphasize the importance of providing your consumers with excellent service. But what if you are providing a service at your customer's home? You particularly need to be careful who works for you. Why? Take for example plumbers, to find the problem they have to walk into your master bedroom to get to your bathroom. They may even need to look and move things from your bathroom and kitchen cabinets. It is important that your customer feels safe and comfortable around the service provider especially if the only person home is a female. This past holiday season we were faced with no hot water. I called our home warranty company and they sent over a contracted plumber. My granddaughter and I were the only ones at home and I felt very wary and uncomfortable with the plumber. First, he drove up in an older model pickup with no identification that he was representing a plumbing company. Second, he didn't have a name badge or a company uniform. His attire was okay, but he appeared very young to be a licensed plumber. Maybe it was his earrings. Anyway, his attitude was that of my son when told to clean his room. He would do it reluctantly and half done. Needless to say, I called the company to voice my complaint and requested someone else. The owner came and apologized for his employee's appearance and as I explained to him my concerns he said, "I don't blame you for being wary at all, I told him not to wear his earrings around customers." I was amazed at the owner's response. Little did he know that it was not just his earrings, but it was his overall presentation. Unfortunately, X plumbing Company did not repair the problem or get called again.

At our request our warranty company sent over another plumber. The two plumbers drove up in a van with the company name prominently displayed around it. Although they were not wearing name badges their appearance and attire was appropriate for their profession. Upon entering our garage they quickly heard a gurgling sound, "You have a water leak," he said. "Yes Ma'am" and "No Ma'am," was all I heard when I asked a question. They explained everything to me thoroughly and said they would be back tomorrow (Christmas Day) to repair it. Whether this company knew it or not, they had just exceeded my expectations. Are you exceeding your customer's expectations? Take heed; if you are a company providing a service at a customer's home make certain to send qualified personnel in a vehicle that clearly identifies your company. It is not only a customer service best practice but it helps advertise your company. When neighbors see a service truck in their neighborhood they know who to go to for a referral. A company ID badge or calling ahead would also be helpful in ensuring that your customers feel safe and comfortable with the person you are sending to their home.

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