

# Standing Out with SERVICE

By Bernadette Braman



“What makes us different?”

It’s a question every business owner thinks about as they consider how to attract customers and stand out from the competition.

When you sell a product that other companies also sell, there are only two ways to compete: price and/or service. In our business, generators, service is the key.

A focus on service guides everything we do. When my dad, Harry, started South Shore Generator in 1982, he asked his employees three questions. How do we take care of the customer? How do we look good doing it? How do we get paid? He always said if you do the first two right then the third should rarely be a problem. Fast forward and my dad’s retired and my brother Eric and I bought the business and operate on similar basic principles of providing honest family values and service you and trust and rely on... guaranteed!

Because we’re so invested in our customer service, there may be other pro-

viders who can undercut us on price. Often it’s because they’re smaller, have less overhead, and don’t offer the depth of service that we do. That’s ok, but we think it’s important for us to offer more.

For the most part, our customers agree - with a customer retainage rate of approximately 95 percent - because we offer industry leading technical expertise and 24/7 emergency service. In 2018, we had back-to-back winter storms and received about 700 service calls! The close relationships we have with our regular customers and the service we offered made a difference in their lives and in their businesses. Talk about standing out!

Some of our clients absolutely cannot ever be without power. For example, a health center in Wellfleet, for whom we designed a three-generator system that allows them to stay operational 24/7 during a storm, and that meets stringent industry regulations, depends on us to remain operational. We perform monthly service to make sure the system is fully prepared to work

during the frequent power outages on the Cape.

We take pride in knowing the service we provide is helping the health center meet the needs of its patients. Their facility director summed it up when he wrote: “Their technicians, service manager and office staff are extremely knowledgeable and very friendly and courteous with many years of experience. Even with us being remote they have always responded day or night in any emergency we have encountered and had us up and running in no time. As a facility director it is imperative to have a great generator contractor on your side and South Shore Generator is one of the best.”

Key to providing excellent service is hiring and retaining skilled employees. It’s a challenge these days, given the shortage of technical school graduates, so recruiting and training and positive HR practices are one of our top priorities.

To deliver a high level of service, you also have to know what your capacity



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is, and when it's time to stop taking on new customers. You don't want to be spread so thin that customers suffer. That's especially important because, as a general rule, ongoing service represents about 60 percent of our business, and sales 40 percent. So it's critically important that we're always there for those "partners" with whom we have maintenance agreements and long standing relationships with. Are repeat customers important for your business? I bet they are.

So how do we stand out? I guess it's pretty simple. It's a message we stress every day with our team. It comes down to just doing the right thing, and caring for the customer wherever and whenever you can. 💰



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## Never Too Old To Be Laid Off

Baby Boomers could face an unexpected loss of their job --- perhaps years before they anticipated retiring, *Forbes Magazine* writes this month.

Contributor Robin Ryan, who covers Baby Boomer issues for *Forbes*, writes that a new comprehensive data analysis by ProPublica and the Urban Institute "shows more than half of older U.S. workers are pushed out of longtime jobs before they choose to retire."

What to do? Be proactive. Keep your skills fresh; learn new ones. Update your resume with accomplishments so potential employers can identify your marketability. Lastly, prove your initiative with your current employer by asking to take on a bigger project.

Live & Learn