

**Remember the Customer!**

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On the Retail Front: Winning the Customer Service Battle, video, 1999, 9 minutes, American Media; 800.262.2557, www.ammedia.com. Purchase US\$395.



Cliff's Customer Service Adventure, video, 1999, 13 minutes, CRM Learning; review copy furnished by Video Learning Systems, 800.622.3610; www.videolrn.com. Purchase US\$625. Other material: leader guide.



Remember Me? 2nd edition, video, 1991, 10 minutes, CRM Learning; 800.421.0833, www.crmfilms.com. Rent US\$195, purchase \$695. Other material: leader guide.



Call of the Mummy, video, 1997, 19 minutes, CRM Learning; 800.421.0833, www.crmfilms.com. Rent US\$195, purchase \$695. Other material: leader guide, participant workbook.



We're on the Same Team, Remember? 2nd edition, video, 1996, 20 minutes, CRM Learning; 800.421.0833, www.crmfilms.com. Rent US\$195, purchase \$895. Other material: leader guide, participant workbook, video discussion segments.

Customer service is a perpetual problem. Bad service is such a common experience that movies play off it, from *The Bellboy* to *Five Easy Pieces* to *Planes, Trains, and Automobiles*. In the latter, a car rental counter agent plans an entire holiday dinner on the phone while her hapless customer, played by Steve Martin, fumes. His transformation from smooth executive to foul-mouthed lout mirrors the fantasy some of us have had about behaving when we've

**RATINGS KEY**

★★★★	Outstanding
★★★1/2	Very good
★★★	Good
★★★1/2	Above average
★★	Average
★★1/2	Below average
★	Poor

been the victims of terrible service.

Bricks-and-mortar retailers flourish or falter on their quality of service, as do companies with call-center operations. But their frontline jobs are often low on wages and high on turnover. That's hardly an easy audience for training.

How do you spread the word about quality service? Video is a good format. It can capture people's attention, assuming it's well produced and a good fit for the audience. It can vividly enact the situations reps have to know how to handle. But the programs need to be brief to fit their intended audience's crammed work schedules. Most of the videos in this review are no more than 20 minutes long.

Four of the programs are about the retail industry, in which turnover is high: *Call of the Mummy*, *Cliff's Customer Service Adventure*, *On the Retail Front*, and *Remember Me?* *Call of the Mummy* is set in a call center; *Cliff's Customer Service Adventure* is tailored to young employees working in such areas as food service, video sales, and photocopy service. *We're on the Same Team, Remember?* deals with business-to-business service issues.

Ready? Here we go!

**Remarkably Unremarkable**

*On the Retail Front*—just nine minutes long—uses a war analogy: "Going to the store is like going to war." A group of people dressed in fatigues jumps from a van. No, they aren't a militia group on an urban training mission. They're a family, and each member has a shopping assignment at a suburban mall.

Two early vignettes, "Pasted on Smile" and "The Indifference Sisters," establish what most of us already know.

When you walk into a store, you never know what to expect. The Indifference Sisters, for instance, are behind the counter. While one's talking on the phone, the other picks at her box of candy. As the customer looks in the case and asks questions, she's met with a combination of annoyance and complete indifference. In fact, neither salesperson smiles or changes her posture to suggest even the slightest interest.

The rest of the video presents familiar reasons an organization or individual might want to improve customer service. Good customer service not only differentiates organizations, but it can also bring the provider a host of financial and personal rewards.

Those benefits can be achieved by genuinely caring for customers, handling their transactions promptly, and saying "thank you." That's the real message of the film. Customer service isn't about heroism, such as the FedEx employee who charts a helicopter to deliver a package on time. Customer service is about things we should be able to take for granted: A smile, an attentive store associate, timely service.

The film wraps by following the family in their fatigues back to the parking lot. Missions accomplished. But war—and shopping—are hell!

The video has humorous and dramatic vignettes, but it seems a bit disjointed. I had trouble remembering the content. And the war analogy didn't work.

**Like, Awesome**

*Cliff's Customer Service Adventure* is customer service for the young.

Cliff is our service Zen Master for the day. As we follow him to a fast-food restaurant, a bank, a video store, a clothing store, and another restaurant, we witness the poor service he receives. Each experience results in an observation and a lesson. He's invisible at the fast-food place; he's told "no problem" instead of "thank you" at the restaurant. Cliff points out some of the service failures we all see every day. The situations move along quickly and are handled with a light touch.

Cliff's final stop is his job in a copy center where he makes the same mistakes he has experienced all day. With each lapse, however, he recalls the lessons and puts them into practice.

This quest for the “inner customer” isn’t new. It’s the Golden Rule repackaged. The presentation is slick and really moves—maybe too fast. Although the video is for all audiences, I think it would be particularly effective for younger workers. It delivers the basics of customer service and adds a lesson about the importance of neatness, not often covered in training programs.

What has taken so long?

### Vanishing Act

*Remember Me?* is a 10-minute wake-up call. Released in 1991, it’s still a best-seller and for good reason: It has a simple but powerful message.

It effectively uses the same story concept as *Cliff’s Adventure* by following a narrator through a series of customer service experiences, but with a completely different feel. At an auto-repair shop, the narrator is told through a closing door to pick his car up tomorrow. At his bank, he waits patiently for a teller who chats with a friend then questions his identity. As he reaches the front of the line at a grocery store, the checker puts up the “lane closed” sign. The experiences go on and on. Through it all, he manages to keep his cool until he finally topples over the edge—more accurately, until he’s pushed over it. Then he screams in frustration.

In the end, the video points out that the customer always wins. If someone doesn’t get good service, he or she leaves. Customers don’t necessarily complain or say much. They just don’t come back, and they share their horror stories with other people. Conversely, good service generates the trust that makes people want to come back. *Remember Me?* promotes the power of the customer and encourages people in service positions to remember that what they do determines whether a customer returns.

### Buried Service

*Call of the Mummy*—or “How to be more than a disembodied voice”—is staged in a call center, but the learning points are applicable to any customer service situation.

The video begins with a woman calling her credit card company. After holding for 20 minutes, she reaches a customer service representative with a monotone voice. When the point of view switches to the call center, we get our first glimpse of the mummified (literally) rep, who’s filmed in black and white.

In addition to covering the basics of good customer service, the video explains how to handle complaints, how to address irate customers, and how service

relates to sales. The points are discussed by the narrator and demonstrated by a group of able telephone customer service people. These CSRs come off as real people, so they appear in color.

In the last minutes, the good CSRs surround the mummy, upset that his poor skills are pulling down the group. The narrator steps in and recaps the key learning points. After hearing them, the mummy sticks out an arm, and the narrator unravels him. The mummy’s image changes to color, and he answers a call with a new voice and a much improved attitude.

The video film is a good introduction to customer service skills and is also the next step up because it covers a little more territory than just the basics. It’s funny and makes good use of the toggle between color and black-and-white to reinforce the content.

### One Thing Often Leads to Another

You’ve heard of Murphy’s Law? Well, in *We’re on the Same Team, Remember?*, if anything can go wrong for Syntek, it does. By the end, this video is painful to watch. Maybe it’s extreme, maybe not. But it sure drives the message home.

Syntek sells computer-related products and services. George, a salesman, meets with Harper, one of Syntek’s best

	Call of the Mummy	Cliff’s Customer Service Adventure	On the Retail Front	Remember Me?	We’re on the Same Team, Remember?
Best feature	More than basics	Youth appeal	Sets customer service baseline	Powerful message	Elicits emotional response
Holds viewer interest	★★★★1/2	★★★★1/2	★	★★★★1/2	★★★★1/2
Acting/Presenting	★★★★1/2	★★★★	★★	★★★★1/2	★★★★
Diversity	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Production quality	★★★★1/2	★★★★1/2	★★★★	★★★★1/2	★★★★1/2
Value of content	★★★★1/2	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Instructional value	★★★★	★★★★	★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Value for the money	★★★★1/2	★★★★1/2	★1/2	★★★★1/2	★★★★1/2
Overall rating	★★★★1/2	★★★★1/2	★1/2	★★★★★	★★★★1/2

customers, to explain the virtues of a new system. The meeting goes well, and the Harper people view the purchase as a foregone conclusion—until. . . .

The next 18 minutes unveil a series of missteps—mistakes, rudeness, poor communication, arrogance, and bad judgment. For example, George doesn't take the first opportunity to schedule the demo with the client and later forgets. Syntek sends the wrong parts to Harper, and when the Harper rep tries to get the situation straightened out, he's transferred, treated rudely, and dealt the hand of indifference. You get the idea. In the end, Harper cancels its order, and Syntek can't understand why.

Any organization can benefit from *We're on the Same Team*, but I think business-to-business companies will find it particularly compelling. It demonstrates clearly how a series of big and small mistakes can create a customer service and sales disaster. Syntek was its own worst enemy.

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There is one slight problem: Sometimes the learning points aren't expressed consistently.

#### Recommendation

If I were running a series of customer service training programs in my company, I'd consider using the four CRM videos to get my message across and augment other instruction. *Remember Me?* establishes the reason customer service is important. *Cliff's Customer Service Adventure* provides basic customer service lessons, and *Call of the Mummy* builds on the concepts presented in *Cliff's*.

Without a doubt, I'd use *We're on the Same Team* as the centerpiece of service

training for a company in the business-to-business market. However, in some retail or consumer situations, people might have a difficult time making the connection between what happens in this video and what they do each day.

CRM, if you're listening, some package or discount based on the purchase or rental of three or four videos might make the concept more enticing.

*On the Retail Front* didn't impress me, especially in comparison with the competitive products from CRM. It could be just a matter of individual taste. I didn't respond to the war analogy or to the odd mix of goofy and serious scenes.

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