

CUSTOMER/
CLIENT SERVICE

»» Cindy Aldridge

PRESIDENT, COMPUNET CREDIT SERVICES

Deep in the heart of Lake Havasu City, Arizona, Aldridge, 41, runs a high-tech service used by truckers across the country to access critical credit information that protects them from getting ripped off on the road. The company's automated fax system delivers credit reports in less than 30 seconds, letting truckers know if their clients pay slowly or not at all. A recent polling revealed a 99 percent customer satisfaction rate, which may be one reason why CompuNet Credit Services has grown to 43 employees since 1984 and had \$2.8 million in revenue last year.

What do your customers say about your company's service? We get letters of appreciation all the time, commenting often on our accessibility, friendliness, and speed.

What's the secret to providing top-notch service? You not only meet the client's expectations, you exceed them. When we tell a prospect about our services, we show them exactly how our service works. But we hold back, we don't tell them everything they'll get from us. We let something come as a surprise.

What kind of surprise? Well, we tell them that they can get a credit report on any company within seconds, but we don't tell them about our proactive early warning program. Whenever we become aware that one of the businesses a customer of ours deals with is not paying promptly, we call and alert our customer. They're always *very* thankful.

Do you have any hard figures to quantify the value of your services to the customer? The average bad-debt ratio in the trucking industry is one-half of 1 percent of dollar volume. For my customers, that ratio is 0 to one-quarter percent.

What advice would you give other business owners for cultivating satisfied customers? Keep your ears open; listen for customers to tell you something that'll make their lives easier. Then, if at all possible, do it.



MICHAEL DARTER