Today, I would like to talk about a passion of mine — customer service. Customer service is a particularly important topic for a sales column as salespeople are generally the primary, and sometimes the only, contact between the buying and selling firm.

Each time the salesperson comes into contact with an existing or potential customer he or she has the opportunity to enhance or destroy the relationship between these two organizations.

Jan Carlzon of Scandinavian Airlines called these crucial interactions “moments of truth” as they can lead to success or failure for the enterprise.

Most business owners and suppliers have focused their lives on delivering quality customer service. Personally, I’ve never experienced or heard an example of poor customer service.

If delivering quality service is such a good business strategy, why do we find so many companies falling short in this area? Perhaps the greatest reason for a failure to deliver a quality customer experience lies in the fact that it is simply hard. It is often suggested that customer service lies in the “eye of the customer.” We all have different ideas of what constitutes quality service and it’s simply hard to make everyone happy.

For example, I personally love it when the employees remember my name at the coffee shop. For me, the ideal coffee shop experience would be great to the salesperson and the organization, but it can be quite challenging.

In my next column I’ll try to shed some light on this difficult process by summarizing a steam of research that has identified five areas of service that seem most important to consumers.

I believe addressing these five areas can enhance customer service in either the business-to-consumer or business-to-business markets. In the mean time, let’s have some fun.

Send me your best or worst customer service story at dshepherd@georgiasouthern.edu. I’ll try to use some of these in the next column.

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Leo McKittrick is a business broker with Best Business Brokers. He can be contacted at leo@best-business-brokers.com or 912-667-7555.

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