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## Changes Coming to ASID



**Michael Alin**, Honorary FASID, executive director at ASID for over 20 years has announced his retirement. Michael will be leaving the Society on 10/1/11.

*"It has been an absolutely fabulous run for me," Alin commented. "I have been privileged to work with some great and visionary volunteer leaders, who always looked ahead to where the interior design profession and ASID needed to go."*

Michael's mark can be found all over the Society's headquarters in Washington, DC, and the exceptional staff he developed. The success of ASID during his tenure was due to his vision of moving ASID forward with a constant eye on the future and planning for change.

## The Cost of Dissatisfied Customers

**It is a bit difficult put your arms around actual costs related to losing a customer**, but the fact remains the impact on your bottom line can be significant. It is common knowledge that holding on to existing customers is far less expensive than courting and converting new ones. There is also a very good chance those customers won't bother to say goodbye either.

**Once a customer leaves, you lose all control over the situation.** You cannot count on them remaining silent about their dissatisfaction. They may not talk to you about their dissatisfaction, but they will talk to others who could be other existing or potential customers. Statistics show that each disgruntled customer will tell something like 8 to 16 other people. See, it can get quite costly and out of hand unless you intervene quickly.

**Customers have far more reach and influence now have thanks to the Internet.** A young man involved in customizing cars ordered some parts from an Internet operation. The parts arrived in poor condition, clearly due to the way they were packed at the warehouse. The box arrived with no obvious external damage, but the parts inside had obvious damage to the finish. When it comes to customizing cars, everything being *perfect* is critical. It's a guy thing, I guess.

**He contacted the company about exchanging the parts, only to be given the run around.** They cited their policy that only allows customers 24 hours to notify them of problems. When the package was delivered, he was out of town, so the box was received by someone else. Seeing no damage to the package, it was just set aside. By the time he returned several days later, the 24-hour policy time frame was long gone.

After several phone calls and e-mails with specific images of the damage, the company finally agreed to take back the parts -- at a 25% restocking charge. They even had the nerve to ask him to repack the parts in bubble wrap (which *they* never bothered to do) before shipping them back. It's true -- you

If you know Michael or have worked with him, please send him a *'congratulations and happy retirement'* note at [malin@asid.org](mailto:malin@asid.org). Wishing you the very best, Michael, you have certainly earned it.

## Visualize Analyze Strategize

can't make this stuff up.

**What the company didn't know** was this young man is very active as the moderator of two on-line car forums. One of the forums has nearly 20,000 members and the other has over 6,000. What kind of costs to the parts supplier will be felt when he shares his unpleasant experiences with other car enthusiasts on those forums? Time will tell.

**If you don't know what mistakes are being made, or what problems exist**, your firm will likely continue alienating even more customers. You owe it to the continued success of your firm to know that your customers are being treated in the very best manner possible to ensure they will happily return over and over again. When they do share information about your company you want it to be positive. You want them to bring more customers to your door.

**If you haven't developed a customer service policy yet, it's time to get crackin'**. Develop a process for getting constant feedback from customers and policies for handling negative situations. Plan now to devote time and resources to not only develop your customer service procedures and policies, but to train any of your staff dealing with customers experiences as well.

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