



Charlotte's Winter



Winter in NC Mountains

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DEALING WITH A SOUTHERN WINTER

Charlotte receives a lot of people who move here for the warmer winters, which overall we usually have, but when we do have a cold spell, it can cause havoc in multiple ways.

Ask the grocery stores what happens when the weather people announce extreme cold or snow, etc. A swarm of people rush to the grocery store and clean out the shelves of all staples (milk, bread, etc.). While hardware stores will see a sudden increase in the purchases of salt, shovels, batteries, etc.

If a hurricane or other bad weather is expected, the public will quickly purchase whatever supplies that they believe is needed to "survive". Unfortunately, when Charlotte and other Carolina cities also find that though the weather may include slippery roads, there are always numerous people who still get out on the highways, causing major accidents.

Those severe accidents are the worst side affects to the winter weather. Many people will lose their lives because of unnecessary road trips. Officials will plead with citizens to stay off the highways, but there are always those who can't seem to resist the challenge.

Still another concern of our southern winters is "power outages". Whether due to ice on power lines, or trees falling, etc., a power outage here in the winter can take days to repair instead of hours. This is usually due to outages that tend to occur in multiple neighborhoods. This puts a strain on our

power company's workforce. Thankfully, other power firms are usually good about helping each other out.

Of course, with all of these issues of a "Southern Winter", there are also families and people who become ill with colds, flu, or pneumonia, especially if the people lose their heat. Charlotte and other communities try to provide "shelters" for those in need, but when the winter storms are massive or lengthy, that can put a strain on those organizations who provide this needed support.

All of these occurrences connected to a "southern winter" usually don't include all of these concerns at one time. Still, those who have lived in the south know that any of these problems can occur. Most will agree that it is better to be safe than sorry.

Therefore, to all of our new citizens from the north, it is wise to understand, that though our winters are seldom to the extremes of the north, keep in mind that our communities don't have the supplies for dealing with a long, hard winter. This is why we may seem a little anxious when we hear of a winter storm. One big winter blast is usually all our region is prepared to handle.

When we were living in the northern mid-west, the area had mountains of salt and supplies for winter. Not so here in Charlotte. Businesses have to keep such things in mind, too. As the Boy Scouts' slogan says, "Be Prepared". Be smart and safe by staying off highways if bad weather strikes.

GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE IS IMPORTANT

When you think of all the things that make a business successful, what is one of the top factors? Good employees are critical, as well as good leaders. Of course, those leaders are expected to have “strategic plans” that keep a business healthy and productive. But when you think of what causes customers to use your business AND keep coming back, a MAJOR factor is “Good Customer Service”.

There are many businesses who are known for their poor reputation, including poor quality of products and services, or possibly charge extremely high fees, etc. What is amazing is how some of these companies remain in business. Some customers rank convenience over good service or products. However, most informed and hard-working people will refuse to return to a business, who has treated the customer poorly.

More and more citizens are turning bad business owners over to authorities. With so many people working so hard for their incomes, it is only reasonable that those unreliable and irresponsible owners face the consequences for their bad business practices. Some of these owners may even be using illegal measures in their businesses.

For those businesses, who make every effort to provide an honest and credible business for customers, there should be some reasonable compensation for being responsible. Likewise, customers who are treated with respect and honesty should take time to relay to the business owner how the customers value such behavior and are likely to spend more with those businesses.

Once you experience poor Customer Service, you will be more apt to acknowledge those with pleasant and respectful behavior. If business owners will take time to provide “Good Customer Service” training of their employees, that business will quickly reap the benefits of a successful future.

TIPS ON EFFECTIVE HIRING PRACTICES

Employers and Human Resources Professionals often find themselves handling the hiring and firing of employees, though that is far from being all that they do. However, for those who are responsible for hiring new employees, you are surely focused on finding well-qualified employees, who are seeking positions where they can make a positive contribution to a business, as well as learn and grow in their skills and talents. The business also strives to select employees who are sure of what they want and interested in landing a long-term position.

Too many employees are known to jump jobs every 2-4 years, if not more frequently. Going through employees as frequently as that costs a business a lot of money: recruiting, training, and repeating this over and over.

On the flip side, many employees complain that lots of employers are bad about not providing “on-board training”, leaving a new employee to try and learn the skills and routine of a position without any support. This causes an employee to view the employer as one unwilling to take responsibility for appropriately training a new employee, possibly positioning an employee for “failure”. In order for a company to be healthy and experience growth and success, they need to: **1)** be sure to have a clear, updated job description in order to identify good prospective candidates; **2)** screen each candidate carefully; **3)** put each candidate through background checks; **4)** confirm all references; **5)** allow the candidate to see the proposed workspace and meet the candidate’s supervisor to determine if all factors are compatible; and finally **6)** plan for a 30-60-or 90 trial period to give both sides an opportunity to confirm or reject the job offer. Including an assessment can be helpful, but not always necessary. Be sure you are clear of your expectations of this person: i.e. having good character, high integrity, flexible, and respectful of others.

REAL ESTATE: THE CHANGING ASPECTS OF THIS BUSINESS & OUR EXPERIENCE

I experienced my own career transition quite some time ago, when moving to Atlanta. I was exposed to the real estate business and had given thought to becoming a realtor, but before I decided, I took an administrative position for a successful real estate firm near our home. During that time I became more acquainted with and respectful of the many responsibilities, demands, and routines of that job and decided it wasn't for me – at least not at that time in my life.

I found the real estate business to be very interesting, and it was a business that was usually fast-paced, as well as being able to meet a lot of interesting people.

Later when moving to Illinois, I took another administrative position in another real estate firm. The mid-western people were very pleasant, and I enjoyed working with them.

However, that was quite a long time ago. Today the real estate business is still an active venue, but many other aspects have changed. Going through transitions is our business, and yet we also respect those experts in various fields and what value they bring when dealing with big decisions.

In the last 12 months Bill and I sold our office building, as our industry has changed a lot over the last several years. Most of our business is handled at the client's location or other convenient spots.

When dealing with the sale of our office building, it took us a while to identify a Real Estate Broker, who was not only experienced but who had the enthusiasm and perseverance to approach our building appropriately. We turned to an old friend, who possessed the qualities we needed: John DiCristo.

Not only did John help us to sell our office building, but shortly after that sale, we decided to look for a new home, with plans of selling our existing home. With the assistance of John DiCristo, a Keller Williams Broker, and his extensive resources, he was able to locate a house that addressed our needs.

John also educated us on other new real estate resources. This allowed us to turn around our home with more ease and convenience.

Over the years we have moved several times due to changes in jobs and positions. Finding a hard-working, honest, and good communicating realtor as John DiCristo has been a huge benefit in our transitions. Since John has lived in the Charlotte Metro for a long time, he is very knowledgeable and his expertise in the technology world is also an asset.

For all these reasons and more, I am more than happy to provide you with **John DiCristo's** contact information: **704-576-6234; jdicristo@kw.com**. Note: John is with Keller Williams Real Estate. I should add that John was also respectful of our needs and priorities. He is a true professional.

WHAT BENEFITS EMPLOYEES SEEK AND EMPLOYERS NEED TO PROVIDE

Employees have specific benefits that they continue to request and will leave a job if they can get them elsewhere. The most popular benefits sought by employees include: **a)** Health Insurance; **b)** Growth and Development Support by employers; **c)** Flexible Work Arrangements; **d)** Time Off for Family Needs (maternity/paternity, health care for elderly parents, etc.); and **e)** Regular Healthy Exchanges with Superiors.

Yes, salary increases are still appreciated, but these other concerns tend to rank higher.

WHAT BENEFITS EMPLOYEES SEEK AND EMPLOYERS NEED TO PROVIDE (Cont.)

These five benefits are more in demand by employees now than ever before. There are some other related benefits requested these days, like “more support and respect for employees by employers”. This may come up if an employee has experienced a poorly behaved employer in the past.

Similarly, “high integrity” in a firm is another priority for other employees. Again, this is usually due to a bad situation in the past.

The request may also be “to receive good training or sometimes reasonable on-board training” specifically. Those conscientious employees want to be sure to receive appropriate training to have a fair chance to succeed in a position.

One last issue that some of the younger generation have noted is to have their leaders to have received “effective leadership training”. Many have commented that they have experienced business leaders with whom they have no confidence. Today’s workforce wants responsible and well-trained leaders and supervisors.

When employers review these requests, they can hardly refuse or deny the importance of these items. If the employer is one who wants his/her business to succeed, all of these requests are valid.

WHAT SHOULD EMPLOYERS MAKE HIGH PRIORITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

How often do employers talk with their employees? Chances are “very seldom”. This is another area that the younger generation believes is a necessity.

In order for employers to be of more support of their workforces, AND which would benefit a company’s bottom line, there should be regular exchanges and not a once a year

“performance review”, which are stressful and ineffective. Conversations are more effective.

In addition to employers having regular chats and exchanges with their employees, an **Employee Survey** could allow an employer to be aware of concerns, which should be addressed promptly. To learn of important issues and to do nothing is purely “IRRESPONSIBLE”.

Companies should use an impartial human resources firm to gather confidential feedback from employees and then gather the key and valued concerns from their workforces. Employers will be highly respected for such efforts.

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can assist with this effort, and be your company’s partner and facilitator to help identify any real concerns. Give this serious consideration and help your workforce to have a healthy work culture.

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Published by Robyn Crigger, CEO.

