

Customer Service Award Nomination

BeneServe Corporate Benefit Services Russ Carlson, president and owner

Russ Carlson describes himself as the healthcare broker other brokers hate.

That's not because the president of BeneServ Corporate Benefit Services isn't a nice guy. Rather, it's because his use of exceptional customer service is literally forcing other healthcare brokers to change the way they do business.

Founded by Russ in 1985, BeneServ is a 15-employee, fast-growing healthcare-benefit brokerage firm serving more than 500 companies in the Delaware Valley. With offices in Center City, Springfield, and West Chester, the company is increasing revenue every year while at the same time providing its customers with superior service.

In his industry, BeneServ is known as the company that "gives away benefits." Traditionally, most brokers act solely as the middlemen between employers and insurance companies. They simply take their commissions and say, "see you next year." BeneServ doesn't do that.

BeneServ puts its customers' happiness first. This means they receive attention and benefits that are unrivaled. For example, BeneServ offers a discount vision plan, an accidental death and dismemberment life insurance plan and unequalled human resource services. Russ doesn't have to provide any of these, but he does.

According to Russ, clients often ask him why he does business the way he does. He tells them that he just can't take someone's money and do nothing. "I would feel guilty as can be."

The business model is working. Seven out of 10 companies Russ pitches his services to switch brokers and go with him. And once he signs a customer, it's usually for life.

While some of his industry colleagues view him as "derailing the gravy train," some are now following his lead and adapting to be more like him.

Russ often puts his own spin on an old ad campaign that said, "Don't hate me because I'm beautiful." Instead, he says to his competitors, "Don't hate me because I provide great service."

For all of these reasons, please give strong consideration to BeneServ for the Customer Service Award.