

Twin Cities Process Servers are Different

By Scott Gray

While the quality of customer service certainly differs between Twin Cities process servers, and you can certainly find poor customer service locally, what can frequently be seen as poor customer service in other locales may be something else entirely. There are many process servers who we work with on a daily basis who would do just about anything to help us please our clients but they simply cannot offer the same types of services we do. More often than not their limitations are entirely reasonable with knowledge of their specific situation and are ultimately frustrating paradoxes rather than an uncaring attitude or a lack of devotion to their customers.

The example that most readily comes to mind is the differences in operational methods that are a result of geography. We're fortunate in the Twin Cities to have reasonable traffic conditions that allow the efficient movement about the area in private automobiles. Conversely the process servers in New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, (the list goes on and on) have had to adapt their business model to their specific conditions. New York City is perhaps the most unique; once the server's assignments for the day are ready they proceed to work through the grid of streets that comprises the island of Manhattan in a linear fashion from their office outwards using public transportation with no intent to return to the office until the following day. Requests needing to be done by a specific time frequently require planning in advance and even then, at times, will be refused because they cannot be accommodated without incurring such a large opportunity cost that it is nearly impossible for the process server to charge enough to make it profitable. The idea of taking a specific time deadline is part and parcel at our office but to many other process servers it is an alien concept.

Compare that to the Twin Cities where, at least in our situation, process servers are constantly coming and going from the office completing their paperwork as they go and taking out new assignments as they come in. This gives us the ability to rapidly confirm service via email, to very quickly insert an experienced office person into the process to address problems and odd situations, and, when asked to do so in advance, rapidly return an affidavit of service. I think the latter is perhaps the most difficult situation with services outside of the Twin Cities. It is at times

incomprehensible that the simple act of getting an affidavit in an expedited fashion is at times not possible. When considering the challenges of the process server it might make entirely more sense as it would more often than not require a special trip by the process server back to the office and depending upon the assignments later in the run it might simply be impossible if it was not planned for in advance.

Even with sufficient planning in advance there can be significant differences in the costs associated with deviating from normal procedure. For example if a server in Chicago is asked to serve a company in a suburb and return to the office to complete their paperwork and return an affidavit of service immediately thereafter it is probably the only job they can do that day. This is clearly a significant opportunity cost and as I have previously discussed there is much more that goes into process serving than simply time and mileage. In addition the service costs in other areas are generally higher than they are in the Twin Cities to begin with. There are many reasons for the differences in cost and it is something that I would like to explore in depth in my February article.

The level of service that the consumers of process service in the Twin Cities receive is, in my opinion, second to none. There are some areas of the country where it is matched but in the 30 years we have been arranging service with vendors in other states I have yet to see it consistently exceeded. The solution to this difference in customer service and difference in the basic ability to provide a similar service level is by no means an easy one. We use the vendor that provides the best service in any particular area and have developed relationships over the past three decades that allow for as complete a package as is possible even though the level of care our customers are used to experiencing is often unattainable.

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