

NORDSTROM

The Nordy Pod: The Truth About Nordstrom's Legendary Tire Story

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There's a famous story that gets told around here, one that many argue is the single most illustrative example of Nordstrom's customer service ethos. It has to do with a customer who brought in a set of used tires and asked for a refund, and many have wondered whether it ever even happened.

On this week's episode of [The Nordy Pod](#), host Pete Nordstrom settles the debate once and for all.

"Almost everywhere I go, this story follows us around, and someone says 'well there's no way that's true. You guys have perpetuated this myth as kind of a metaphor to talk about your service culture,'" Pete says. "And I say 'no, it's actually true.'"

The tire story *did* happen— and Pete even tracked down the former Nordstrom employee responsible for the now-famous interaction.

Here's what we learned:

The story starts almost 40 years ago at a Nordstrom store in Fairbanks, Alaska, where Craig Trounce was a store associate. One day, Craig noticed a customer rolling a pair of tires into the store. When Craig asked how he could help, the customer asked to return the tires, insisting that he bought them at that very location with a guarantee that he could bring them back to the store at any time.

Of course, Nordstrom never sold tires. But in 1975, it purchased three stores from a company that did —Northern Commercial of Alaska. The Northern Commercial Company offered an eclectic mix of goods— everything from towels and linens to automotive supplies. When Nordstrom took over the locations, it narrowed the merchandise mix to apparel and shoes.

Instead of turning the tires away, Craig wanted to do right by the customer, who had driven more than 50 miles with the intention of returning these tires. Knowing little about how tires are priced, Craig called a tire company to get their thoughts on how much the tires were worth. He then gave the customer the estimated amount, took the tires, and sent him on his way.

Lost over the years is the exact dollar amount the customer received in exchange for those tires, but no doubt it's been earned back a thousand times over when you consider the scope and resonance of the story today. In fact, the tire story has become so important to our culture, we even hang tires in some of our stores and break rooms as a reminder of our commitment to our customers.

But don't take our word for it. Check out the full story on this week's episode of [The Nordy Pod](#) to find out exactly what happened that day in Fairbanks, Alaska, and the impact it's had on our employees and our customers.