



KIWIHOST

NEW ZEALAND'S CUSTOMER SERVICE EXPERTS

# #90: Ideas & Inspirations

## In this issue:

- > "It's key to the success of our service" - Kiwicare Pre School Case Study
- > So Old School It's New: Direct Sales And The New Recipe For Retail
- > 12 Tips for Better E-mail Etiquette
- > The Cutting Edge

## Words of Wisdom

*"People may hear your words, but they feel your attitude."*

- JOHN C MAXWELL

## Service Tips:

IDEAS & INSPIRATIONS offers a weekly customer service success idea delivered by Pod Cast. KiwiHost's Service Tips Podcasts are a 90 second dynamic service message that will inspire you to focus on one aspect of your customer service. It will get your mind stimulated to look for ways to implement real customer service improvements.

### Here are the latest Service Tips from KiwiHost:

- Keeping in Touch
- Good service keeps customers coming back
- Give respect, get respect

To listen go to more podcasts, go to [www.soundcloud.com/kiwihost](http://www.soundcloud.com/kiwihost)



## "It's key to the success of our service"

*Kiwicare Pre School provides care and education to more than 1000 children across Auckland. Their centres are in Avondale, Mangere and two in Papatoetoe, with some of the children and teachers being relatively new to New Zealand.*

*Many of the children have experienced more change during their short lives than many adults do in a lifetime. They, and their parents, have experienced changing country, climate, culture and language so customer care is very important as their staff meet with parents every day and need to maintain highly professional and trusting relationships.*

Kiwicare Pre School started training with KiwiHost when they opened in 2001. CEO Heather Anderson believed that the teaching degree did not actually teach adequate customer service and they had multicultural staff who wanted to help understand the Kiwi way of friendship.

### SOLUTION

Kiwicare Pre School decided in their first year, all staff should attend KiwiHost training and now they send all staff who move into management positions or who have leadership potential on the public workshops regularly scheduled in Auckland.

Initially staff attended the basic customer service workshop, but that has now extended to include all the KiwiHost core workshops, including Key Service Skills, Advanced Customer Service, Professional Telephone Skills and recently they have added Dealing with Difficult Customers into the mix.

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# So Old-School It's New: Direct Sales And The New Recipe For Retail

Direct sales aren't just for Avon ladies - in fact, they're getting downright modern again and work as a cost-savings tool and a customer-service play. A younger generation might find this hard to believe, but at its roots, the concept of retail is based on direct sales. Before chain stores replaced direct selling as the mainstream mode of distribution, no one would have thought twice about choosing to buy their everyday products from a friend in the comfort of their home. Over the years, direct selling has earned itself a bad name, and these days many companies don't even consider it.

We've come a long way since the days when Tupperware parties and door-to-door cosmetics sales ruled the retail world, but what we've learned from this industry is that by leaving direct sales behind, we're failing to take advantage of valuable resources with the potential to take brands into broader markets, cut distribution costs, reach new customers, and bolster brand loyalty. This is not to say that we should revert back to the way things were. Rather, we need to embrace direct sales as a valuable strategy to complement brick-and-mortar stores and e-commerce. The combination of these three channels is the perfect combination for the next wave of retail.

In recent years, e-commerce has taken a significant bite out of "traditional" retail, and for good reason. Online shopping affords great convenience and an unbeatable selection to the customer, and it allows companies to save heavily on distribution costs. The trouble is, online-only business models can be difficult to scale due to high customer acquisition costs and a limited capacity to engage on a personal level in order to drive repeat sales. Though e-commerce sales continue to soar across industries, online-only brands are now seeking to supplement their digital presence with physical spaces like pop-ups or short-term leases in vacant mall stores in order to reach people offline. Additionally, the costs to manage an e-commerce business are rising significantly, driven primarily by the need to offer free shipping, regular discount offers and liberal return/exchange policies.

Physical stores - particularly in well-trafficked malls and shopping centres - boast the advantage of being able to catch the eye of shoppers, drawing them in to browse items they might not otherwise have been looking for. Years of research have taught merchandisers just how to position their products to drive in-store sales, while sales associates are trained to engage potential customers to buy, perhaps spend more than they otherwise would have, and leave

feeling good about their purchases. These are important resources for brands seeking to establish themselves in the consumer consciousness, but the fixed costs associated with this model (rents, employee salaries, insurance, inventory stocking, and so forth) can be unjustifiably high, and can increase year over year, forcing companies to raise their prices or sacrifice profits.

So where does direct sales fit into this puzzle? Rather than altogether replacing the in-store shopping experience or eschewing online options, direct sales can elevate a brand's presence in a number of ways by working in conjunction with these other channels.

One important advantage of direct sales is that it opens up opportunities to reach small to mid-sized markets, where the costs of setting up a store often outweigh the benefits, but consumers still demand alternatives to online shopping. In regional markets, networks of direct sales associates

this model naturally lends itself to vertical integration, which allows brands to deliver exceptionally on both quality and price. By going straight to the same mills and factories as traditional luxury retailers and selling direct to the consumer, brands can skip the middlemen in the traditional supply chain and slash the costs of distribution. To give just one example of how this cost structure works, by using a vertically integrated model, it's possible to sell a luxury dress shirt that costs \$45-\$60 to make for \$135 instead of the \$300-\$600 that comparable brands would charge after layering in the costs of the old standard supply chain.

The ability to exceed expectations for quality at a fraction of the price of similar premium brands is what really makes things interesting. If you don't "wow" the customer, odds are they won't stay around for long, but if you can get the product right at an unbelievable price, you can build customer stickiness quickly.



*We've come a long way since the days when the door-to-door salesman ruled retail, but we need to re-embrace direct sales as a valuable strategy to reach new customers.*

have the power to leverage their networks (both personal and through online social channels) to identify potential customers and physically bring products to them to see and feel. This offers a level of personal services that is rarely found even in luxury retail stores, as well as exceptional convenience. Technology today is making it easier than ever before to build, train, and sustain a direct sales force, and consumers are ready for change. In other words, direct sales makes it possible to tap into the potential buying power of underserved consumer markets, in addition to providing an appealing shopping alternative for people across the country.

A second benefit of direct sales - and this is arguably the most important - is that

Couple this with the convenience of an online option, which streamlines the process for those who have already gained confidence in how their order will look, feel, and fit, and you're able to give customers even more of what they want. To take a brand to the next level without adding excessive costs, adding a smaller number of flagship stores in core markets, designed to engage customers with an experience that beats the standard can help to create a sustained physical presence.

What this all tells us is that there are opportunities across industries for companies to rethink what they've learned about retail and elevate their businesses in ways they'd never before considered.

# 12 Tips For Better Email Etiquette

E-mail messaging now exceeds telephone traffic and is the dominant form of business communication. Some attendees at a recent KiwiHost workshop tell us that handling e-mail consumes half of their day and recent reports indicate that some workers will soon find themselves spending three to four hours a day on e-mail.

Here are some things to keep in mind regarding professional e-mail conduct:

1. **Be informal, not sloppy.** It's ok to use commonly accepted abbreviations in e-mail to colleagues, but don't assume your clients will know what they mean.
2. **Keep messages brief and to the point.** Just because your writing is grammatically correct does not mean that it has to be long. Concentrate on one subject per message whenever possible.
3. **Use sentence case.** USING ALL UPPERCASE LETTERS LOOKS AS IF YOU'RE SHOUTING. Using all lowercase letters looks lazy. For emphasis, use asterisks or bold formatting to emphasize important words.
4. **Use the blind copy (BCC) and courtesy copy (CC) appropriately.** BCC when sending to a large distribution list, or CC when you want to keep a few people directly involved. Don't overuse either, as it clutters other people's inboxes.
5. **Don't use e-mail as an excuse to avoid personal contact.** Don't forget the value of face-to-face or even voice-to-voice communication. Don't use e-mail to avoid an uncomfortable situation or to cover up a mistake.
6. **Remember that e-mail isn't private.** E-mail is considered company property and can be retrieved, examined, and used in a court of law. Always keep the content professional to avoid embarrassment.
7. **Be sparing with group e-mail.** Send group e-mail only when it's actually useful to every recipient and only if you have something to add.
8. **Use the subject field to indicate content and purpose.** Agree on acronyms to use with colleagues that quickly identify actions.
9. **Don't forward on chain letters, virus warnings, or junk mail and direct personal e-mail to your home e-mail account.**
10. **Remember that your tone can't be heard in e-mail.** Have you ever attempted sarcasm in an e-mail, and the recipient took it the wrong way? E-mail communication can't convey the nuances of verbal communication.
11. **Use a signature that includes contact information.** Businesses often have a standard format prepared that you



*Remember that e-mail isn't private. E-mail can be forwarded, so unintended audiences may see what you've written.*

should use, so check with your manager or someone else in the office if there are company signature guidelines.

12. **Summarise long discussions.** Instead of continuing to forward a message string, take a minute to summarize it for your reader. You could even highlight or quote the relevant passage, then include your response.

Use these suggestions as a starting point to create e-mail etiquette rules that will help your team stay efficient and professional when communicating with clients, customers and colleagues.

*From [www.office.microsoft.com](http://www.office.microsoft.com)  
Written by Laura Stack.*

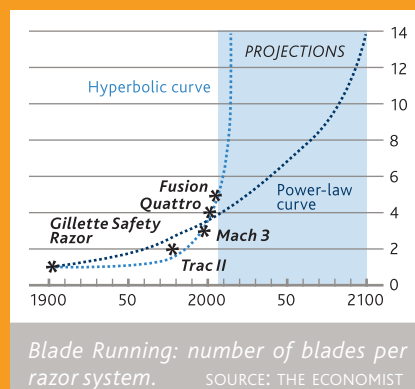
## The Cutting Edge

Over the past decade or so I have seen my personal shaving razor blades go from a single blade to ones containing two, three, four and now the Gillette Fusion Proglide has five blades & batteries! I have been a committed Gillette customer, having only briefly moved away to try Schick once, but my reaction to the ever changing blades is "Not Again!"

The fact that with every blade the price goes up also, from 10 years ago when it was \$5 for 5 blades, to now buying:

- 4 blades for \$17.35 (\$4.34ea.) for the Mach 3 OR
- 4 blades for \$27.99 (\$6.99ea.) for the Fusion Power

Based on this cycle of increasing blades we could expect to see a razor blade with 10 Blades by 2080, with the matching price tag.



### I HAD HAD ENOUGH!!

Then I saw it... Dollar Shave Club. Could it be true; \$1/mth for razors. If you haven't seen it, check out the immensely popular video at [www.dollar shaveclub.com](http://www.dollar shaveclub.com). This was what I was waiting for, an excuse to move away from ridiculously overpriced and non sensical multi razors! Unfortunately there was a small problem, they didn't ship to New Zealand. But the seed was sown, Google here I come. Sure enough, there were multiple options for

how to purchase razor blades for half the price.

I've just subscribed to [www.razorblades.co.nz](http://www.razorblades.co.nz), where I get 4 razor blades for \$9.99. Not quite \$1 each, but hey I'm sticking it to the man!

### SO, WHAT'S THE MORAL OF THIS STORY?

In today's marketplace you can alienate your customers, there is just too much choice provided by either other bricks & mortar retail outlets or by simply going on-line to a shop anywhere in the world. By continually changing things and increasing the price, Gillette has alienated me to the point where I no longer feel associated with the product and therefore the brand.

The only way they could get me back is to go back to where they once were and match their competition.

One blade. \$1 each.

*Written by Jared Brixton,  
KiwiHost Managing Director*



## Don't forget about our New Programmes!

### ADVANCED SERVICE SKILLS FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

A workshop specifically for Healthcare Professionals. Learn what your patient's service expectations are and how to meet them effectively.

### DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS

Our NEW & IMPROVED Dealing with Difficult Customers workshop gives participants skills to manage conflict, so that they can approach disagreements with confidence that keeps personal and professional relationships strong.

### TIME MANAGEMENT

Is time management an illusion? An effective ideal? A learnable skill?

In a time where the reality is the need "to do more with less" what are the secrets of the effective, productive, management of time.

*Please contact your local KiwiHost representative to see if these workshops are running in your area, or for more information!*

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**EMAIL US:** [mail@kiwihost.co.nz](mailto:mail@kiwihost.co.nz)

**OR WRITE TO:**  
KiwiHost Limited  
PO Box 6450  
Upper Riccarton  
Christchurch 8442.

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"Customer service is absolutely vital to the success of our business. We look after other people's children, their biggest treasures. Trust is imperative, as is good communication. By providing best possible customer service we are able to gain and maintain that trust."

"We will continue to send our staff for KiwiHost training to ensure we retain our high level of customer care. We are passionate about continued professional development as key to the success of our service."

### BENEFITS

"The KiwiHost training has helped Kiwicare improve our relationships with our customers and the wider community. We also learned how to build stronger teams and to communicate more effectively with each other."

"Training provided by KiwiHost is very user friendly and the group discussions open

doors for new ideas and ways to deal with everyday situations."

*"After attending the workshops we felt more confident and better motivated to explore our strengths. We gained valuable understanding of the importance of outstanding customer service and knowledge of how to put this into place"*

PALWINDER REHAL, PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER



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**LISTEN TO OUR PODCASTS ON SOUNDCLOUD**  
[www.soundcloud.com/kiwihost](http://www.soundcloud.com/kiwihost)

**AND WE'RE TWEETING!**  
Look out for @kiwihost on [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)



## Congratulations to our latest KiwiHost Endorsed Service Provider!

### PROPERTY & RISK UNIT - HAMILTON CITY COUNCIL

KiwiHost Endorsed Service Providers recognise the importance of quality service and training to successful New Zealand businesses. By educating and assessing customer service skills KiwiHost Endorsed Service Providers help deliver quality experience and enhance business performance.

To find out how your business can become an Endorsed Service Provider, visit the KiwiHost website and look for "Endorsed Service Providers" under the Products Menu.



# National Training Schedule

## KEY SERVICE SKILLS

*Duration: 1 Day*

	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
Auckland		10		
Waikato				
Bay of Plenty		8	28	
Palmerston North				
Napier & Hastings				
Wellington		16		25
Nelson				
Christchurch	21 <sup>T</sup>		21	
Dunedin		3		

## ADVANCED CUSTOMER SERVICE

*Duration: 1 Day*

	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
Auckland	28		15	27
Waikato	13		21	
Bay of Plenty		9	29	
Palmerston North	13		21	
Napier & Hastings	26			
Wellington				18
Nelson				19
Christchurch	27		28	
Dunedin			9	

## PROFESSIONAL TELEPHONE SKILLS

*Duration: 1 Day*

	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
Auckland	12			26
Waikato			22	
Bay of Plenty				
Palmerston North				6
Napier & Hastings		18		
Wellington		4		11
Nelson				
Christchurch		9		
Dunedin	7			26

## DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS

*Duration: 1 Day*

	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
Auckland	20			
Waikato	28			
Wellington		5		7
Nelson				
Christchurch	19			

*To request this workshop in your area contact your local KiwiHost representative.*



**KIWIHOST**

NEW ZEALAND'S CUSTOMER SERVICE EXPERTS

PHONE 0800 801 233

WWW.KIWIHOST.CO.NZ

# National Training Courses



## KEY SERVICE SKILLS

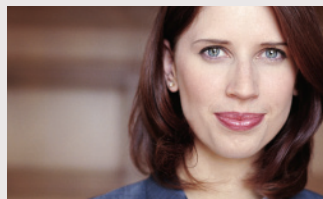
Customers rate personal interactions miles ahead of any other feature in the buying experience – including convenience. Key Service Skills is a dynamic fresh new course from KiwiHost that will keep customers loyal when you empower your staff with core customer service techniques and a “Can Do” attitude from KiwiHost.

This workshop is the essential first step to inspiring a passion for customers in every corner of your business, and will provide staff of any business or organisation with grounding in the concepts of professional customer service.

*This workshop will enable the participant to:*

- > Communicate effectively.
- > Meet, greet and remember names and faces.
- > Listen actively and ask open questions.
- > Understand that the customer is the lifeblood of the company.
- > Avoid assumptions and change customer perceptions for the better.
- > Give the customer a quality experience and demonstrate how that benefits everybody.
- > Handle complaining customers and solve service related problems.

*Duration: 1 Day*



## ADVANCED CUSTOMER SERVICE

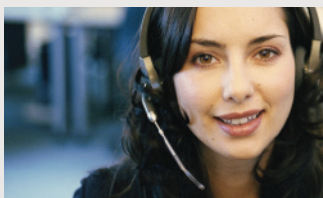
Regardless of your business or the make-up of your staff, everyday your business is presented with opportunities to generate new customers and to retain and grow existing ones – well trained, professional staff will recognise those opportunities.

Advanced Customer Service will motivate participants with customer service experience to expand their skills in dealing with a wide range of customer interactions, by developing an understanding of what the customer wants and expects. The workshop also includes training on how to add value to transactions and how to build a customer ladder of loyalty making sure that the customer returns.

*This workshop will enable the participant to:*

- > Understand 'how and why' their role is important.
- > Turn all customer service scenarios into gold.
- > Use the strategies to turn problem, angry and difficult customers into happy ones.
- > Complete a self-analysis of their service attitude and skills, to build empathy.
- > Identify the four levels of customer expectation.
- > Give great first impressions.

*Duration: 1 Day*



## PROFESSIONAL TELEPHONE SKILLS

The drive for greater productivity, cost cutting and environmental changes have only increased the importance of the telephone as a business tool. Few businesses have equipped their staff to cope with the demands, pressures and opportunities that the telephone offers.

Professional Telephone Skills has been substantially updated and improved to equip business for a telecommunication driven world, and to develop participants' understanding of the telephone as a customer service tool.

*This workshop will enable the participant to:*

- > Understand that the telephone is a vital element toward achieving professional customer service.
- > Have meaningful and pleasant interaction with the caller and offer excellent service and help.
- > Be positively aware of the need for clarity, good pronunciation, tone and attitude.
- > Be able to listen, use open questions and clarify the caller's needs.
- > Use questioning techniques and effective listening.

*Duration: 1 Day*



## DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS

Conflict is a very normal part of healthy relationships. Success comes from understanding how we behave, as well as how we can influence others. If difficult interactions are necessary, and we approach them with a plan, we will find that we have less difficult people to deal with. By learning skills to manage conflict, you can approach disagreements with confidence that keeps your personal and professional relationships strong.

Participants in this workshop will learn how to turn difficult situations into opportunities for growth, and come away with techniques to enable them to deal competently with a challenging situation in such a way that the organisation's reputation and customer service relationship are seen in a positive way.

*This workshop will enable the participant to:*

- > Recognise how attitudes and actions affect others.
- > Find new and effective techniques for dealing with difficult customers.
- > Learn techniques and strategies for managing and dealing with anger.
- > Develop coping strategies for dealing with difficult customers and turning difficult situations into win/win situations.

*Duration: 1 Day*