



# ideas & inspirations

FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE PROFESSIONALS

From KIWIHOST

Issue 70, March 2008

## ideas

### WHO ARE YOUR SECRETARIES

No discussion of product development is complete without 3M's Post-it® Notes. When Dr. Spencer Silver first developed his low-tack, reusable adhesive, he couldn't persuade anyone within 3M of its value. Even after Art Fry had devised the Post-it concept several years later the company executives still weren't interested.

Then Fry had a brainstorm. After making a batch of pads, he bypassed traditional channels and distributed them directly to secretaries at 3M. "He correctly assumed they would use the product, become fans and share them with others. In no time the secretaries—and their bosses—were using the handy notepads and requesting more

Putting a new product into the hands of the people who can best use it is a solid strategy. While distributing free samples is a great way to get started, you can recruit your own "secretaries" by:

- Asking your most loyal customers for testimonials and referrals.
- Looking for people who call on your customers. If they truly see the benefit of your product or service, they will become evangelists for your brand.

However, networking is a two-way street; you must be willing to reciprocate. Also, these relationships don't occur overnight—it takes time to turn a customer or strategic partner into a raving fan.

**Point:** *"Everyone needs a great secretary," You have to identify your "secretaries," people who understand your product and will share information with others*

## inspirations

### WRITE TO YOUR CUSTOMERS NOT AT THEM

When you communicate with customers on paper or via email, being too formal or "official" will turn off your readers. Follow these suggestions to warm up your message:

- Ditch the corporate tone;

Don't write "Information regarding dispatch procedures can be accessed via our Web site". Better: "Log on to our web site if you have any questions about our dispatch procedures.

- Bring your customers into the conversation;

Avoid third-person phrases like "All customers must ..." and "Guests will ...". Write "you" and "we" statements instead. Examples: "You need to ..." and "We will ..."

- Choose an active voice;

Passive verbs create confusion, leaving your readers unsure who should be doing what. Vague: "Payment must be received before your order can be dispatched." Clear: "You must send your cheque or provide a credit card number before we can dispatch your order.

Simple ideas build strong relationships.

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### WORDS OF WISDOM

Even one employee who fails to buy into your customer service programme will hurt the result

## THE LITTLE THINGS THAT COUNT

When we ask someone; "How was the service" we often get a mixed or neutral answer. We had an excellent example of leaving a restaurant with a very confused impression.

The day was sunny and the view over Auckland's skyline was inspiring. When we arrived we were greeted warmly and taken to our table on the deck.

The menu was explained, the wine arrived, the orders were taken. We ordered a selection of bread and dips which was promptly brought to the table.

However, yours truly being a beady eyed nark about service, was getting a little frustrated after 45 minutes when the main course had not arrived.

Our waitress had disappeared off the face of the earth so we signalled another staff member who said she would check. Our mains arrived 5 minutes later brought to our table by the owner with profuse apologies and an explanation. So a bad mark for the delay, but top marks for recovery in the end. It's the fixing that counts.

However, whilst we were drinking our coffee a group was shown to the next table and a staff member brought an ash tray. The last 5 minutes (no additional coffees were ordered) were destroyed by the emission of cigarette smoke.

Impressions and feelings are about the little things.

It's the little things that you have to manage if you are to ensure that your customers leave with positive feelings.

We were impressed by the recovery, however our final impression and the lasting one was, "NEVER AGAIN".

Regular readers will be well aware that I don't knock businesses, I only praise them.

Unfortunately, the last action destroyed all the good work done in correcting what can be an unfortunate situation in any restaurant. Unfortunately, the last impression is also the one that is remembered.

By the way, the food was excellent. A great pity that we won't be enjoying it again.

## Editors insight

### Positive Success

"You may have more control and influence than you think."

These words from an economist discussing the market in the context of the present economic situation. He pointed out as we move into a more challenging economic cycle, that the successful companies do extremely well.

Yesterday, February 18th, the New Zealand Herald in reviewing Fisher and Paykel reported that F & P had increased their market share of white goods in the US at a time when the overall market was in decline.

So don't let the economy commentary define your business. See challenges as a time to refocus on the opportunities, when others can only see negatives.

I won't insult you by listing the clichés about tough times and so on. Those of you who read "Ideas and Inspirations" will know that every period of economic rough water presents exciting opportunities.

It is enlightening to discover the number of really successful organisations who have found success in challenging economic times.

But it doesn't just happen. It happens because managers and owners readdress their priorities, look to what can be changed and are prepared to go in a new direction and accept the risks.

It is obvious that the key success in 2008 and 2009 will be skilled innovative people with an attitude of success.

So set your organisation apart and on a path to positive success.

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## inspiration

### SIX STEPS TO REMARKABLE SERVICE

The fastest way to increase customer loyalty is by improving the quality of customer service you deliver. Here is an easy yet valuable road-map. It's easy to understand and can be effective in keeping us on track so we consistently deliver what our customers want from us.

1. **Connect with your customer:** This is critical. This is where you establish rapport and begin a relationship with your customer. Connecting means building trust that runs both ways. Do this by engaging your customer. Start by giving them your name and asking theirs. Be interested in them and what they want. Ask questions. Listen. Respond appropriately. Have a conversation with them. Be genuine.
2. **Discover what they want:** If you have a genuine conversation with your customer, you will discover what they want. They don't always know what they want. Or they might have trouble expressing it. Often people know what they want but they're unsure how to get it. That's where you come in.
3. **Know what you can do:** We can't always give the customer everything they want. Sometimes they want what we can't do. Other times, it's something we choose not to do.
4. **Do it:** This sounds easy and maybe it should be. To execute well you need to be able to measure what's important. What gets measured gets done. So, convert your customer's wants into actions you can measure. Then setup a system to measure the outcomes and the actions that produce them.
5. **Follow-up:** For customers, this is icing on their cake. It's true for you too because it's easy to do yet it pays huge dividends in customer loyalty.

As you plan your execution phase, make sure you plan a follow-up contact. Follow-up by phone, email, letter, visit, whatever works. The more direct and personal the better but make it work for your customer and your company. This excites customers because very few companies do it consistently.

6. **Thank them:** When you thank your customers, be sincere. Make it genuine. Thank them in multiple ways, not just once. Make sure they know you are grateful for their business.

Follow these six steps with every customer and you'll find your level of customer service will increase dramatically. Coach your staff to understand and work through these steps and you'll see your customer loyalty and customer retention grow significantly.

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## inspiration

### EIGHT WORST CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAITS

We recently received from our good friend Deborah Schmidt, what she has identified as the eight worst customer service traits found in the behaviour of staff.

Read the list, think about your own organisation – are any of these reflected in the way your organisation through its staff, responds to your customers?

- Apathy/boredom - an “I don’t care about you or my job” attitude.
- The brush-off - getting rid of customers by transferring them too quickly, before determining if their problem is something that the staff member can help them with.
- Coldness - including impatience, curtness, and even hostility toward customers.
- Condescension - a patronising attitude, creating communication barriers by using jargon, or using a customer’s first name without permission.
- Robotism - treating customers as if they are nothing more than numbers such as the “Have-A-Nice-Day-Next” automatic response.
- Rule book reliance - using company guidelines as an excuse for not providing service, even when a staff member knows that a rule can be bent.
- Giving the run-around - sending customers on a wild goose chase to find answers because no one is willing to take ownership of the problem.
- Tuning customers out - not focusing 100 percent on the person speaking, whether it’s a customer, a co-worker, or a manager, and not asking questions to verify understanding.

Makes interesting reading. Think about this as both a customer of the business and a business which depends upon customers for success.

*If any of these traits are present amongst your staff, send them on an appropriate KiwiHost workshop.*

## fishing tip

### IDEAS FOR FINDING NEW CUSTOMERS

*Sales often happen because prospective customers hear about your products and services in several different ways and from several different sources. The more often they hear about you, the more likely they are to consider what you have to offer when they are ready to buy.*

### BUSINESS BOOSTER IDEAS

#### ***The 5 P’S For Success! — Perception***

Give your vocal quality a warm empathetic, helpful tone - the kind of voice you like to hear on the other end of the line when you telephone a business.

How? Use your body language to make a big difference. Yes, that’s right, your body language. Sit up, lean forward slightly and smile as you speak. Feel a little silly? Then pretend the person you’re speaking to is sitting in your office with you. The caller will hear your attentive and pleasant expression that communicates your total attention.

Telephone tip: Some people say it’s helpful to keep a mirror by your desk so you can see yourself as you talk with callers. That will help you monitor your body language so you can make adjustments if necessary.