



## ideas

### ARE YOUR CUSTOMER SERVICE STAFF BOGGED DOWN BY RULES

When your customers have a problem, do your front line staff handle the situation in the same way that you or the owner would? So often the answer to that question – is No. Most owners/managers believe that their staff would, but as a customer we see a different perspective of behaviour.

The root cause of this problem is the lack of alignment between what the owner or manager feels about customer relationships and what the front line staff member perceives as being the right thing to do. When challenged, the front liners will respond with the comment that they lack the resources, tools or authority.

But in reality it isn't a lack of these things. It's a lack of clear alignment within the business. It is the difference between "doing my job", which means making the customer's problem go away, or "doing the right thing", which means taking the initiative and actually solving the problem.

Most front line staff would love to solve problems, but they are constrained by rules and procedures that prevent them doing much more than responding with a polite, "thanks for letting us know – I will let someone know". Their smile and polite response may be the last communication that occurs between your company and the customer.

So think about how you can align your staff thinking with the goals of the company so that staff see that doing their job and doing the right thing are the same.

## inspirations

### FIVE POWERFUL WORDS

"They serve like we lead." - Sir John Sainsbury, founder of the UK supermarket chain.

I love it when truth is reduced to its absolute essence so we can all understand it. In those five words, Sir John Sainsbury had already distilled what it later took a number of big brains at Harvard years to toil over and define as 'The Harvard Service Profit Chain', sometimes called the 'People, Service, Profit' chain. Basically, the way you lead and manage people determines how they treat customers, which determines how happy the customer will be, which determines how much profit you will get from them coming back.

Treat staff with respect and they will treat customers the same way. Treat them brusquely, as if they are unimportant and you don't have time for them because you have important things to do and..you work it out. <sup>(2)</sup>

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### WORDS OF WISDOM

*Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at 20 or 80,  
Anyone who keeps learning stays young,  
The greatest think in life is to keep your mind young*

*Henry Ford*

## WHAT DO CUSTOMERS WANT?

In November the results of the first ever KiwiHost/JRA Perceptions of Customer Service in New Zealand survey backed up our long held belief to please, delight and inspire loyalty in your customers. Businesses need to ensure their employees are actively engaged in their work. It is employees who are the face of the business and respondents to this survey have sent a clear message that their perception about a business rests on the attitude of the people at the frontline.

So what do New Zealanders want from your business?

There are three things that are important to their level of satisfaction:

Showing a willingness to help me

Listening and understanding what my needs are

Take responsibility to ensure my needs are met

These three themes were voted by respondents as being the most important to a customer's level of satisfaction with the service provided. Get these three things right, and many more customers will walk away with a positive perception of your business.

### Show a willingness to help me

Everybody knows there is nothing more frustrating when you walk into a business and nobody pays you attention. It is even worse when the staff actually talk amongst themselves whilst you are left to your own devices.

Everybody knows that first impressions count and it is clear from the responses to this survey that having staff who clearly demonstrate a willingness to help customers in a friendly and respectful manner, provide a positive lasting impression to a customer.

### Listen to me and understand my needs

Isn't it great when you have a problem, someone then takes the time to listen to you and they understand what it is you want or what your problem is. Respondents to the survey agreed that this was very important to them.

### Take responsibility to meet my needs

There is nothing more frustrating when people within a business refuse to take responsibility to sort out your problem or deliver what has been promised! If you continuously have to explain your needs to a new person each time, that YOU are doing the chasing to see where things are at. Ultimately nobody actually cares about you as a customer.

When you think about it, its simple - customers just want someone to follow through and meet their needs, someone who will update them and let them know the progress, and ONE person they can talk to who knows exactly what they are calling about.

*For a full copy of the report email your name and address to [admin@kiwihost.co.nz](mailto:admin@kiwihost.co.nz) and a copy will be posted to you.*

## COMPLAINTS CHOIRS

An interesting phenomenon appears to be growing in popularity.

At "Ideas and Inspirations" we happened to be searching for some background on another subject and we discovered on "You Tube" a number of presentations by choirs, of music and lyrics that reflect customer service complaints.

We watched and listened to a number of these. They were interesting and entertaining, but below the surface they expressed consumer dissatisfaction, which they communicated using music and voice.

If you have a few minutes, check it out. Go to "You Tube", "Videos" search "Complaint Choirs".

Only by diligent focus on the customer and ensuring that we provide impeccable service will we discourage the growth of this phenomenon in New Zealand

## THE SILENT KILLER OF BUSINESS

It seems harmless, but its crippling effect is running rampant in the business world.

Entire days are lost, projects poorly planned and executed, and work pushed aside, as entrepreneurs become slaves to its hypnotic pull.

It was designed to make life easier and speed up communications, but instead has become the nemesis of the already overextended person in business.

Have you guessed what it is? If you're reading this, there's a good chance that you are also a victim of the cursed 'email.'

How many times a day do you check your email? How much time do you spend each time you open your inbox?

A colleague discovered he was spending 15 minutes of every hour checking email - the majority of which is spam.

Another colleague sensing he had fallen into the email trap, recently started a stat sheet. In one day he checked his email twenty one times! He was trying to curb his habit but was still struggling.

Would you as a responsible business person walk to your mailbox 10-15 times a day to collect bulk mail and advertisements? If not, why would you do it at your computer?

Recently a multi-millionaire who has built several companies, recently discussed his obsession with email and the impact it was having on his productivity!

It's an ongoing dilemma and all any of us can do is to be constantly aware of it, keep our activities in check and do whatever it takes to stay the course.

Tim Ferris, author of *The 4-Hour Workweek*, defines email as, "The greatest single interruption in the modern world" and recommends weaning yourself down to one visit a day. He's actually reached the point where he checks his inbox once a week.

If anyone needs you badly enough they will pick up the phone and call, and if they don't, how important could it really have been?

Are you ready to take control of this silent business killer? If discipline is an issue, find an accountability partner or state your intentions to your peers. If you can't do it yourself, have others rally around and support you.

It takes 26 to 30 days to break an old habit and create a new habit. Create productive, winning habits and you'll be on the fast track to business success.

## EMAIL REVIEW CHECKLIST

Before hitting "send", take one last look at your email.

- Does the email begin with the most important information?
- Is the information provided in a logical order?
- Have you clearly stated the solution?
- Have you explained the relationship between the problem and solution, as well as why the solution is appropriate?
- Have you clearly described the actions the customer needs to take?
- Have you explained exactly what actions **you** will take?
- Have you left out any information the customer might need?
- Did you include contact information for further inquiries?
- Is the email error free? Are all names, dates and numbers correct?

KiwiHost Ideas & Inspirations may be forwarded via e-mail, printed for circulation, and quoted FREE of charge. No permission is required, but please mention where you got this information. It's also perfectly acceptable to post Ideas & Inspirations on your company's Intranet.

## inspiration

### KNOW ABOUT YOUR CUSTOMERS

How much do you know about your customers? Do you know what makes them happy? mad? restless? Let's face it, you should! Businesses often operate in ignorance of what their customers like or dislike, ignore and abhor. To ensure retention, pay attention!

The Basics: What Customers Love

- When you know them, remember them by name and remember their preferences.
- To be treated with respect
- To feel special
- To know you're accountable when problems arise
- The ability to reach a live voice or person when problems arise
- To receive lagniappe - a little something extra, for their money's worth
- How We Can Win Points With Customers
- Exceed their expectations!
- Anticipate client needs even before they do
- Proactively head off problems before they occur
- Advocate for your customers with management
- Provide full service - offering one-stop shopping for myriad client needs
- Make doing business with you fun and easy
- Don't make charge-backs, returns and problems problematic to address
- Grow with your customers
- Treat them like royalty and employ a touch of class in your interactions.<sup>(1)</sup>

## fishing tip

### IDEAS FOR FINDING NEW CUSTOMERS

*Join organisations and attend the meetings and seminars that you know your prospects might attend. Learn to work the room, get introduced to people and always be making contacts that could lead to sales. Watch the newspapers and websites and discover organisations that hold events that might attract your target market. Attend some of those meetings and spend time listening to others.*

### BUSINESS BOOSTER IDEAS

#### THE 5 P's FOR SUCCESS! — PERCEPTION

*Do you know what your purpose is? A lot of people do not succeed because they haven't found their purpose. Sometimes you may have to ask yourself what is your true purpose for doing what you are doing? Once you begin to understand the relevance of purpose, whatever it is you are trying to achieve becomes simple. You must be guided by purpose. There are many people with the desire to be successful but have no purpose to be successful. You have to make sure that whatever it is you are trying to achieve in life in order to be truly successful must be based upon what you have considered your purpose to be.*

Articles in I&I include reference to the following sources:

Harrison, Craig. Forget the Fockers. Meet Your Customers. Retrieved 26/11/07 <http://www.businessknowhow.com/marketing/meetcustomers.htm>  
Dourado, Phil. Start the Month: Starbucks Organisational Chart. Retrieved from email 12 Nov 07