



ideas & inspirations

FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE PROFESSIONALS

From KIWIHOST

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ideas

This is the last issue of ideas & inspirations for 2007. However Monday Morning Motivations will continue to the 17th of December. Both will be returning at the beginning of February.

Therefore all of us at KiwiHost wish you a very happy and fulfilling Christmas season and we look forward to 2008 being a successful year for your customers and therefore for you.

There is little doubt that increased competitive pressure within a growing economy creates greater focus on the customer. This means that customer satisfaction will increasingly determine the success or otherwise of all businesses. As Peter Drucker wrote some years ago, "The customer is the business".

The preliminary results of the KiwiHost/JRA survey, which are published in this issue of ideas & inspirations, show clearly what the New Zealand customers want and expect as opposed to the level of service they are receiving.

It shows that in terms of providing customer service we still have a distance to travel. However the target will continue to move. Unless we speed up our rate of acceptance of the importance of customer service, we will continue to fall behind the expectation of the market.

So make 2008 a special year for your business. Make it a year where your customers come to appreciate the real meaning of service. Lift your level of customer commitment – make your customers the most important people in your business.

QUOTE FOR THE MONTH

*He who gains a victory over other men is strong;
but he who gains a victory over himself is
all powerful.*

Lao Tzu

inspirations

REVIEW YOUR DAY

Here's a short, easy and brilliantly attractive exercise from comedienne Carol Burnett — now in her 70s and still a star performer. Never go to bed, Burnett advises, until you do the following:

Review your day and think of at least three successes and at least three things you are grateful for. That's all it takes—one minute spent blessing your day can completely shift your point of attraction. Especially if you do it consistently.

Why is this process so powerful? Thoughts are creative. Yet, most people go to bed without taking a single moment to deliberately choose the thoughts they prefer. That lack of attention to what we think is what Abraham (www.abraham-hicks.com) calls being "sloppy" about how you vibrate.

Go to bed worried and you are creating/attracting more things to worry about. Why not have your pre-sleep thoughts be those of accomplishment and appreciation?

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FARMERS MARKETS

The growing phenomenon of the genuine “Farmers Market” provided me with an insight into the core dynamics of what trading is all about.

A recent Sunday morning found us walking through a local farmers market in a Northland town, where over sixty local producers were selling literally the “fruits of their labours”. The outstanding quality was the enthusiasm of the trader-growers for their own products. This coupled with their product knowledge provided an insight into what the selling/marketing process is about. It also clearly identified one of the success keys of Farmers Markets.

The experience of being informed by a bright sixteen year old, obviously the son of the stall holder, about how to judge the difference between top quality bacon and the “other stuff” was a wonderful experience.

This young man knew his product, and was able, through enthusiasm, to communicate clearly the difference between his parents’ product and the bacon purchased at a supermarket. Without realising it, he was providing the USP (unique selling proposition).

As I listened, I asked why other people don’t do this. This young man believed in what his family were doing. He was genuinely passionate about the product and the enjoyment we would experience in consuming the bacon from their farm.

He convinced us that this was the most wonderful product that one could buy. And he was one hundred percent correct. As we, the next day, enjoyed the bacon with some fresh country eggs, his promise was kept and our expectations more that met.

Every business needs to take a lesson from the Farmers Markets concept. We left the market with a very clear message. Enthusiasm for what the customer will experience or how they will benefit is the key to selling success.

So think about this in your own business. Do your customers leave you with the expectation that the experience of your product or service is going to be outstanding?

CUSTOMER SERVICE 101

While recovering from open-heart surgery, an owner of a small business had plenty of time to analyse how the hospital’s doctors, nurses and medical support staff engaged in their work and owned the outcomes. In the process, he developed and wrote down some broad insights about customer service in a medical environment. He found no difference between what was happening in their hospital to that in any other sector.

Customers don’t care about your problems. They want a product or service delivered as promised, not an excuse for why it didn’t happen. And be prepared for indifference if your idea of small talk includes personal anecdotes about kids with the flu or a flat tire on the way to work. Remember, they’re your customers, not your friends.

Customers don’t understand quality. “Most customers have no way to measure the quality of the goods/services you provide,” he writes. “All they know is the experience that surrounds the sale.” Since we tend to base opinions about quality on the overall experience, you must always back up a great product with great customer service.

Customers need you to manage their experience. By anticipating what might confuse or concern your customers and mapping out the road ahead you can put them at ease. Put your best people in key positions. “I’ve always been mystified that customer service jobs in most companies are among the lowest paid and least respected positions,” writes the heart patient. “These staff members enforce or kill your brand every time they answer the phone or greet a client.”

The Point: Every interaction with a client—from initial contact through follow-up customer service—must at all times strengthen your brand. ⁽¹⁾

CUSTOMERS WANT 'ONE-ON-ONE' SERVICE

"Perceptions of Customer Service in New Zealand"

Our Survey has identified a shift in customer expectations.

The business trend to 'process customers faster' may be behind a shift in Kiwis' attitudes towards customer service, as identified by preliminary findings of the first annual KiwiHost/JRA Perceptions of Customer Service in New Zealand Survey.

The three most important customer service criteria identified by the majority of those surveyed as being most important to New Zealanders are:

- Someone takes responsibility to meet my needs
- Someone shows willingness to help me
- People listen and understand my needs

Managing Director of KiwiHost, Simon Nikoloff, said KiwiHost has been involved in improving the attitudes, motivation and communications skills of staff for more than 17 years and is aware, from experience, that previously most customers wanted to feel appreciated.

"The demand now is not so 'touchy feely', as it is a desire for 'one-on-one' service. This, in the past, was probably a given. "We found that fast food outlets and telecommunications industries were the least popular, while cafes and restaurants appeared to fare well."

The 'business to consumer' results of the survey found that only 30 per cent of New Zealanders who responded to the survey are satisfied that their needs are being met.

Senior Consultant at JRA (NZ) Ltd, Amy Shipley, said preliminary findings make it clear that the customer of today hates being ignored while staff, for example, carry on conversations or busy themselves with other activities.

"Customers want to see a 'willingness' to help them from the people serving them."

Ms Shipley said that while caution has to be exercised when drilling for data by age and gender, JRA is happy that the survey has had a good, valid number of responses. "This is a very good outcome for the first time that this nationwide survey has been carried out, with results expected to become more robust as the bi-annual survey gathers momentum. A sample of more than 344 New Zealanders countrywide – with numbers still coming in – have been surveyed so far," Ms Shipley said.

KiwiHost – New Zealand's most established customer service quality and training standard – has teamed up with JRA (NZ) Ltd (of the popular unlimited/JRA Best Places To Work survey) to conduct the nationwide, definitive Kiwi customer service survey.

The survey will cover three primary areas:

1. Business to consumer – how business treats consumers;
2. Business to business – the state of customer service in the B2B marketplace;
3. Youth – what perceptions do New Zealand's teenagers have of customer service and how are they treated as a group?

From next year, the survey will be held twice a year and alternate between taking the pulse on business to consumer customer service and business to business service.

If you would like a detailed copy of the research finding, please email your request with your postal address to admin@kiwihost.co.nz

special
announcements

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inspiration

I'M "JUST" A BUS DRIVER? – Does Your Job Matter?

John Gordon tells this story about speaking at a conference where the audience was made up of several hundred bus drivers. Ironically, when the conference organisers booked him to speak they didn't know he had written a book – The Energy Bus – a story about a bus driver named Joy who changes the life of a man who regularly catches her bus.

John Gordon goes on to say, "After my talk I met a gentleman who told me that he was a pastor of a small local church. He said he originally started driving a school bus for the insurance benefits but after a few years it occurred to him that he was having a bigger impact on people as a bus driver than as a pastor at his church. Wow.

This made me think about all the hard working, good hearted people who walk around and believe that the work they do is insignificant. They'll say things like "I'm just a receptionist," or "I just take care of the event details" or "I'm only in sales" or "I just drive a bus" or "I'd really like to do non-profit work so I can do something that makes a difference."

The fact is every job, no matter how insignificant you may think it is, matters. Every job matters because you matter. And the impact you have on others matters... a lot.

You matter to your clients. You matter to your co-workers. You matter to the people you interact with every day. You matter more than you could ever know. It's not about the job but the difference you make within your job that counts.

So whatever job you do, I hope you will also consider yourself a bus driver, on a journey through life, who has the opportunity to positively impact all the people who ride on your bus. Consider everyone you meet and work with a passenger and know that the greatest and most significant job you could ever have is to make a difference in their lives."

Your job matters and so do you! ⁽²⁾

fishing tip

IDEAS FOR FINDING NEW CUSTOMERS

Watch for events that may bring your potential market together. Contact the organisers of the event and offer to give away your product or service as a prize during the event in exchange for having the group promote you in their promotions.

BUSINESS BOOSTER IDEAS

THE 5 P's FOR SUCCESS! — PERCEPTION

Applied the right way perception can be very instrumental in your success. How people perceive you, your business or whatever you're trying to achieve can make all the difference in the world. My point of view is probably going to be a lot different from most because I market people for a living. I have to look at most things by how people's perception will be, not by how it really is. It's like being an image consultant, the person's appearance basically is focused on more than who the person really is.

Think about when you first put on a new suit or new dress you just feel different. It works both ways; the way you perceive yourself in it as well as the way others perceive you. The power of perception changes our entire outlook. Perception can catapult you and your business to another level.

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

1. Customer Service 101 From email Get to the Point from MarketingProfes. 28/8/07.
2. Gordon, J. Does Your Job Matter? Extracted from Email jon@jongordon.ccsend.com 10/9/07