



ideas & inspirations

FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE PROFESSIONALS

From KIWIHOST

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ideas

One common topic of conversation today is value. Whether it be in the overheated retail battleground or amongst service executives in contract discussions, the question is, "Is it a fair price for the quality?" in other words, value.

Let's face it, whatever you are selling or whatever service you are providing, someone else is doing exactly the same or something similar.

You can compete with product range, additional services, enhancements and of course better prices. Building new customers, whatever you do, will cost you money; but what are you doing about enhancing the value of your relationship with your existing customers?

Are you building trust? Are you helping your customers feel that their relationship with you is secure? Are you making it easier for your customers to interact with you? Are you delivering confident self esteem, a sense of belonging and a strong emotional bond? In other words – feelings?

Yes, these things are challenging in today's fast stressed and pressured environment. But if you don't start to think about the emotional value of your customer's relationship with you, someone else may. As a result they may woo your valuable customers away.

In this issue of Ideas & Inspirations we would like to share with you some ideas that will strengthen your emotional USP's. (Unique Selling Propositions.) We hope you enjoy them and that you are stimulated to put at least one idea into practice.

IN THIS ISSUE

- REDUCE STRESS AND IMPROVE CUSTOMER RELATIONS
- MEETING CUSTOMER'S EXPECTATIONS
- GINA'S RESPONSE
- ASKING FOR LETTERS THAT SUPPORT SERVICE
- BUSINESS BOOSTER IDEAS

inspirations

THE SMALL THINGS THAT COUNT

Here's a story about a couple's experience on a visit to Dunedin that illustrates the importance and the strength of little things in building customer relationships.

Naturally they included a visit to Larnach Castle where they had lunch. Their next stop was the beautiful Olveston, which was a 30-minute drive from Larnach Castle.

When they arrived at Olveston, the lady discovered she had left her handbag at Larnach Castle. A phone call established that the bag was safely in the manager's office.

But the next comment was a real illustration of "Going the extra mile" and "Southern Hospitality". The person to whom they were speaking asked the question, "Where are you staying?" After answering, "Leisure Lodge", the further response was, "Well don't worry, I will be able to drop it off to you about 5pm this afternoon."

A small but significant action. For the visitors to have driven back down the Otago Peninsula to Larnach Castle would have been an hour of potential site seeing time wasted, apart from the annoyance and frustration of their own error.

This simple action demonstrates one of the pillars of building great service and creating a point of difference that makes a relationship memorable.

Going the extra distance to make the customer's experience memorable, is the essence of customer service contained within an organisation's culture and attitude. It's at the very heart of a business. The fact that the person at Larnach Castle's first reaction was "How can we help?", is more important than the delivery of the solution. This also illustrates how items of good service can travel. The story was top of their mind when the visitors, on returning to Auckland, were asked, "How did you enjoy your weekend in Dunedin".

WORDS OF WISDOM

Statistics suggest that when customers complain, business owners and managers ought to get excited about it. The complaining customer represents a huge opportunity for more business.

Zig Ziglar

REDUCE STRESS AND IMPROVE CUSTOMER RELATIONS

Stress is an inescapable part of the life of everyone involved in Customer Service. If you are sincerely concerned that each and every customer's issues are dealt with in a positive way, you are continually exposed to stress creating situations.

Unfortunately when you are stressed, those who you interact with are affected. The customer senses that all is not well and other staff's performance is affected by any tension that surrounds the workplace. Having a stress and tension free environment is a critical factor in delivering to customers a level of service that is top quality.

The following ideas for managing stress will help you relax and enjoy life. As a dividend, you'll be more productive, so you'll create less stress for yourself and your customers.

1. Laugh. Laughter is one of the best ways of releasing tension. Find things to laugh about and people to laugh with. Laughter is a great antidote for taking life too seriously.

2. Take Breaks. Learning to interrupt a stress-producing activity will help give you the break from tension that you need. You'll return refreshed and ready to be more productive.

3. Make "Happy" Plans. Anticipation is exciting. Plan to see a special movie, eat out with someone you like, or do something special.

4. Focus Your Thoughts. The habit of thinking about too many things at the same time is fatiguing and stress producing. Instead of being overwhelmed and unproductive, concentrate on one task at a time. Make a list of the other things you must do, and then put the list aside, so that you don't have to think about the tasks or worry about forgetting them.

5. Check Yourself. Stop to see if you are relaxed. Are your hands clenched? Is your jaw tight? Tension will begin to spread through your body, so catch it early. Let your arms hang loosely, relax your mouth, and breathe deeply.

6. Tackle the Hardest Jobs First. This will provide you with a sense of accomplishment, and create momentum for completing other tasks. The pleasant things, if saved until last, will make the end of each day enjoyable.

7. Go Task by Task. If you finish one task at a time, you will avoid feeling fragmented and overburdened. It is also easier to see where you are going when you give each task your full concentration.

8. Move. Speed up your body by moving to music, stretching, or jogging. Movement helps eliminate pent-up stress by aiding the removal of the chemicals that produces stress.

9. Manage Your Time. Use a plan of action. Do a daily to-do list. Schedule only as many tasks each day as you can reasonably finish, but always leave time for the unexpected.

10. Help Someone and Smile. Lending a helping hand or smiling can do what other methods of relaxation can't. They give you a wonderful feeling of happiness and well being.

11. Enjoy Yourself Now. Stop whatever you're doing and celebrate being alive. Feel the physical processes inside you, the good in people around you, and the beauty of the world you live in.

If you are enjoying yourself, so will your customers enjoy their interaction with you.⁽¹⁾

BUSINESS BOOSTER IDEA

Satisfied customers are not loyal customers. Over 70% of all customers are in flux, just waiting for the next best deal ... creating loyal customers can significantly reduce the number of your customers in flux as well as help you capture those in flux of your competitors.

monday morning motivations

ideas & inspirations is now introducing a weekly customer service success idea. This will be delivered by Pod Cast. Each Monday we will help you start your week with a 90

seconds dynamic 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.

June Pod Casts:

4th June: The 'F-Factor'

11th June: Training

18th June: Recognition

25th June: Good Intentions

To listen go to our website www.kiwihost.co.nz and click on: Monday Morning Motivations.

MEETING CUSTOMER'S EXPECTATIONS

When something goes wrong with their order, their account or the product, customers have certain expectations about how the problem will be addressed – they expect it to be fixed quickly, satisfactorily, and with sympathy. However, in some cases service recovery expectations go beyond that.

According to a recent edition of *Delivering Knock Your Socks Off Service*, it pays to understand and be ready to respond to those expectations if you want to keep those customers. Research has identified the following top 10 service recovery expectations. It's a list with broad implications for every business.

Top 10 service expectations are:

- Being called back when promised.
- Receiving an explanation of how a problem happened.
- Knowing whom to contact with a problem.
- Being contacted promptly when a problem is resolved.
- Being able to talk to someone in authority.
- Being told honestly how long it will take to resolve a problem.
- Being offered useful alternatives if a problem can't be solved.
- Being treated like a person, not an account number.
- Being told about ways to prevent a future problem.
- Being provided with progress reports if a problem can't be solved immediately.

Examine your own operations and endeavour to discover how effective your business is in meeting expectations. Once you have a benchmark, constantly work towards reducing the incidents of breakdown. In this way you will start to see the results of improvements in the way you interact with customers and facilitate the recovery of service breakdowns.⁽²⁾

GINA'S RESPONSE

We recently received a letter from Gina's, the restaurant that we featured in the April issue of Ideas & Inspirations. As we read their letter (which is printed below), it again reminded us of a critical point.

Hi and thank you for the wonderful story about your "experience" at Gina's on Valentines Day earlier this year.

Your article was timely in that it's just what my husband and I have been discussing with our staff recently: There are many great Italian restaurants in Auckland but people choose to come to Gina's time and time again for the atmosphere. An experience where they won't be molly-coddled but instead treated as if they have been invited to some crazy-but-immensely-hospitable Italian persons home.

My husband Alessandro is from Tuscany and his home was just like that. It didn't matter if they were arguing or lovin'. It was a home full of noise, intense emotion, passionate debating and always centred around the dining table covered with the wonderfully delicious wholesome cooking of Alessandro's mamma.

So it's not something we tried to create at Gina's, its just the way we are and certainly it's not for everyone but that's ok too.

Thanks again and kindest regards, Joyce Fantoni.

Any business can create a "Customer Experience" from some unique factor that is special to their business. At Gina's they share with their guests "a home full of noise".

So why don't you think about the things that reflect the "way you are" and build around that an experience that your customers or guests can share.

special
announcements

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ASKING FOR LETTERS THAT SUPPORT SERVICE

Pursue testimonials because third-party endorsements really work. Asking for testimonials is an essential business skill that can help increase the profitability of your business. Occasionally customers will send you a letter, however you need to be pro-active in asking for testimonials.

If you know a customer is particularly pleased with your product or service, always ask for a letter. You could say: "I really appreciate you saying that and it's helpful for me to get letters from satisfied clients. Would you be willing to put what you just said in writing and send it to me on your letterhead?"

Getting them to actually write you a letter is another issue! About 40 percent will send you a letter. People don't mean to break their word, they're just busy.' To improve the response, send them a note thanking them "in advance" for the letter they'll be sending.

If your customer or client is an industry influencer or centre of influence, you need to persevere. Leave it a few weeks and then telephone. Usually they will apologise, however you can suggest putting some thoughts on paper for them. They can edit or rewrite and then return it on their letterhead. They will usually agree.

The letter should include:

The problem or challenge that your organisation addressed.

Your professional and effective solution.

How happy they are to be your client and how easy and rewarding it is to work with your organisation.

Your ongoing concern for their needs.

The value of your response to their problems.

Use testimonial letters in your promotional material and on your website. When you say something great about your business, it may sound like bragging. When someone else says it, it becomes the truth.⁽³⁾

A CONVERSATION ON 18TH MAY 2007

The day after the budget Michael Cullen, Winston Peters and Rodney Hide were flying together in a small aircraft to Westport.

Winston looked at Michael, chuckled and said, "You know, I could throw a \$1000 note out of the window right now and make somebody very happy.

Michael shrugged his shoulders and replied, "I could throw ten \$100 notes out of the window and make ten people very happy."

Rodney Hyde added, "That being the case, I could throw one hundred \$10 notes out of the window and make a hundred people very happy."

Hearing their exchange, the pilot rolled his eyes and said to his co-pilot, "Politicians! I could throw all of them out of the window and make four million people very happy."

BUSINESS BOOSTER IDEAS – BE LIKE WALT—WANDER AROUND WHERE THE CUSTOMERS ARE

"Walt wanted everything done right. He'd walk around the park in old clothes, so that people wouldn't recognize him. If he saw a carpenter doing careless work, he'd say, 'You know, that looks a little sloppy. You should take more pride in your work.' The carpenter would wonder, 'Who does that guy think he is? Walt Disney?'"

John Kimball, long-time Disney employee

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

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