



KIWIHOST

NEW ZEALAND'S CUSTOMER SERVICE EXPERTS

#77: Ideas & Inspirations

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Words of wisdom

*Always do your best. What you plant
now, you will harvest later.*

O G MANDINO

Monday morning motivation

IDEAS & INSPIRATIONS offers a weekly customer service success idea, delivered by Pod Cast. Each Monday we will help you start your week with a 90 second 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.

- Oct 6 Your Number 1 Customer
Contact Channel
- Oct 13 Are Leaders Born or Made
- Oct 20 Better Listener
- Oct 27 How Can You Give Customers
a Little Thrill



To listen go to our website
www.kiwihost.co.nz

Create Your Own Brand

Up until now in New Zealand the only farming enterprises that had been able to effectively brand and market themselves has been wine producers.

We have at Ideas and Inspirations been asking the question "Why has farming allowed its products – meat, fibre, milk fats and other product to leave the point of production and be amalgamated with thousands of other producers and marketed as a generic raw material?"

As a result, the consumer whether they are eating a steak or wearing a sweater has no knowledge or connection with the producer and no knowledge of the unique quality associated with the initial production of the raw material.

So we were excited to learn about the number of dairy farms who are now moving into establishing unique cheese making operations and promoting their own brand of cheese.

This trend is growing and has been further stimulated by the establishment of the New Zealand Cheese School at Putaruru in South Waikato.

Apart from enthusiastic amateurs this week long course is being attended by dairy farmers who are starting up their own boutique cheese operations many of whom are organic farmers.

A dairy farmer who is able to brand even a small part of their output is creating a substantially value added business. The farming community has for too long allowed centralised marketing and production to control its future. Producers need to take back some control of their product so that they can add value in terms of quality, presentation, appeal, flavour and to use these unique benefits to leverage and command a higher price.

This is what business is about. More and more businesses are discovering the unique values they can add to their products and services by separating themselves from the current market place.

This leads to greater returns and greater satisfaction. The New Zealand Cheese School is not only providing some within the dairy industry with a unique strategy but also raising their profits.

This is good for everybody.

Hopefully more primary producers will explore the opportunities to create their own exclusive brands and add value to their business.



Editors Insight

How do leading brands stand out?

This is the question that challenges both large and small businesses.

Leading brands stand out because of the experience they offer their customers, which then feeds the perception of the brand.

To transform your brand into a leader, you need to consider three points that can help you stay in front:

Improvise. A leading brand responds to its environment by using intuition and technical ability to create something truly new, different or unexpected.

Focus on your unique characteristics. Your product or service might have plenty of good points, but you'll get more traction by highlighting one or two key differentiators – and sticking to them.

Spend more time with your customers. It's too easy to forget about the people who matter the most to the health of your brand. "The time to talk with customers is now"

Leading brands lead because they are ahead in creating something that has value to those who need and want it. The people managing those brands are not afraid to risk a little to go all the way to the edge.

If you are managing a brand irrespective of whether it's a small retail outlet, a specialist cleaning service or a unique IT product these three critical management elements are the same. The application may be different but the points are the same.

Strategic brand management already is and will in the future be the key to brand strength and profitability.

Ideas

The Impossible Melon

Have you heard about the curious case of Japan's square watermelons? With retail and refrigerator space at a premium, Japanese farmers decided that there must be a more efficient way to package the traditionally oblong fruit. It didn't require any genetic wizardry, either—all they did was grow watermelon in a square box so they would take on the right-angled shape. Simple? They're also cheaper to ship and command premium pricing.



This idea of thinking inside the box comes with a few key takeaways:

Don't assume anything. Just because you've always done things a certain way, that doesn't mean there aren't other ways to reach a goal. The best way to tackle these assumptions is to question your habits. If you can make an effort to question the way you do things on

a consistent basis, you will find that you can continually improve the way that you live your life and conduct your business.

- > Look for a better way. You're never going to create a superior solution if no one ever asks for one. It's likely that there are plenty of good ideas just waiting to be brainstormed—start thinking.

ACTION POINT: If you begin with the notion that something is impossible, then it obviously will be for you. If, on the other hand, you decide to see if something is possible or not, you will find out through trial and error.

The Painless Way to Raise Prices



Businesses commonly raise prices. When you need to do so, just send a letter explaining that you've worked to keep prices steady, and the need for a modest increase of X percent.

But, how else might you get the increase you want without incurring the wrath of existing customers?

> 2 Ideas

- > Charge extra for special privileges. If you save your customers' valuable time with dedicated customer service and faster turnaround they're likely to regard a surcharge as a good investment.
- > Raise prices in targeted segments. "A business person who needs to be in Nelson on Monday and back on Wednesday will pay more for a ticket than a Grandma planning a visit to her family". You probably have similar segments within your customer base.

No matter how you handle a price increase, one element is critical. Be upfront and demonstrate value. Your clients don't begrudge you making a profit.

Sooner or later, you're going to raise your prices. An intimidating prospect? You can implement a price rise without alienating your customers. Just apply a little forethought and finesse.

Inspirations

Service Standards Help Translate Your Service Mission Into Reality

As more organisations attempt to improve service, the question of how service will be improved is often ignored in the rush to make changes.

Organisations will recognise the need to improve customer satisfaction, then develop a service mission statement, communicate the importance of offering quality service to front line, then stop short of explaining exactly the mission or how to effectively make the customer's experience more delightful. Then they fail to provide staff with the skills to implement the important insight.

What's missing are the concrete service standards and skills that staff can use to improve service in real-life situations. Failure to provide employees with clear standards leads to inconsistent service – with staff making individual interpretations of service excellence.

Well-defined service standards, give staff examples of superior service and the necessary "how-to" information to perform to management expectations.

For example, staff may be required to be "friendly and attentive" to a customer but if that's the extent of the service message, staff will interpret it differently. However, if an objective service standard is communicated, as, "Greet all customers with a smile within 30 seconds of entering and ask how you can be of service," staff have a clear definition of how they should act and what they should say.



Developing Service Standards

Setting realistic service standards is not easy. Any attempt at setting standards involves a great deal of adjustment and review. Here are five ideas for developing and implementing realistic service standards:

Ask Customers what's important. All customers know how they want to be treated. Use focus groups, exit surveys, and feedback from survey cards at a business' location to determine critical service criteria. These should be the start point for a discussion on service standards.

Involve staff with management. Frontline staff and their immediate supervisors know more about what it takes to delight customers than anyone. Plan a working meeting to share customer research results, then ask staff what standards should be set to guarantee customer satisfaction. You'll be surprised at how high they'll set standards.

Discover what barriers are keeping staff from offering excellent service, such as not having enough authority to act on customer requests or unwieldy transaction processes that don't allow instant refunds.

Start small and focus on key areas. Don't try to implement standards for every area of the business. Instead, concentrate on areas that are essential to your success, such as trying to differentiate your organisation from the competition. Avoid the tendency to standardise everything staff do. Allowing creativity on the part of staff will show you respect their intelligence.

Train to the standards. Give new staff a copy of the standards as part of their orientation. For on-the-job training, pair up new staff with one of your top performers and ask them to watch the service standards in action. Then have the new person practice to fine tune skills.

How often is a business allowed to 'stuff up' before the average Kiwi is 'fed up'? – Customer service pulse aims to find out

The 2nd annual KiwiHost/JRA Perceptions of Customer Service in New Zealand Pulse is set to explode some myths when results are announced in November – including real numbers on how many New Zealanders complain about bad service, how many will tell others about their experience and just how often is a company allowed to 'stuff up' before the average Kiwi is 'fed up'?

Launched on 1 September, anybody can complete the short 5 to 10 minute online survey at www.kiwihost.co.nz starting from 1 September 2008 – the online facility will also allow people to tell their customer service stories, and name names.

KiwiHost New Zealand Joint Managing Director, Jared Brixton, said companies which feature prominently and repeatedly in the good news stories will receive a certificate and flowers for their efforts.

KiwiHost – New Zealand's most established customer service quality and training standard – has once again teamed up with JRA (NZ) Ltd (stakeholder survey and analysis specialists, and founder of the popular Unlimited/JRA Best Places To Work survey) to conduct a nationwide, definitive 'pulse check' of Kiwi customer service.

Senior Consultant at JRA (NZ) Ltd, Amy Shipley, said that while the unlimited/JRA Best Places To Work survey is important because the way people are treated at work is of national significance, so is customer service

"It's a topic that is close to everyone's heart and, like your job, a major topic of discussion around the water cooler," says Amy.

To participate and be in to **WIN** one of twenty five \$20 petrol vouchers, visit www.kiwihost.co.nz

Advanced Customer Service



In today's competitive world customers have more choice than ever and they're conditioned to make quick, snap decisions.

Advanced Customer Service will make sure your staff are equipped, ready, willing and able to respond.

Check out when the Advanced Customer Service workshop is running in your region through October.

LOCATION	DATE
Northland	17/10/08
Auckland	16/10/08
Waikato	14/10/08
Coromandel	20/10/08
Rotorua	29/10/08
Bay of Plenty	15/10/08
Taranaki	16/10/08
Hawkes Bay & Easy Coast	16/10/08
Wellington	16/10/08
Christchurch	15/10/08
Otago	15/10/08
Southland	28/10/08
Central	22/10/08

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Five Ideas

Here are five ways to strengthen your relationships with your customers.



GET IN TOUCH

Make a call, send a hand-written note, send an email (in that order of priority – the further up this list the more valuable the contact will be). Let them know you care, make the effort to be connected.

STAY IN TOUCH

Don't make this contact a one-time event but part of an ongoing process of staying in touch, connected and at the top of the mind for your customer.

ASK HOW YOU CAN HELP THEM

No strings and no qualifiers. Do you appreciate it when someone offers to help you with something? So will your customers, even if they don't take you up on the offer.

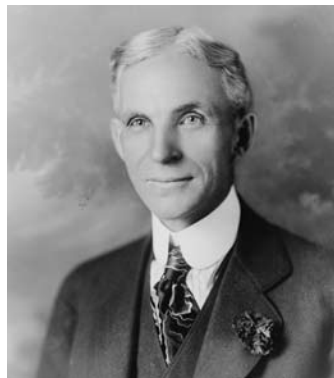
EDUCATE THEM.

Send an article, share an idea. After you know how you can help or what their challenges are, it will be easier to determine the best things to share based on their interests and needs.

FOCUS ON SERVING NOT SELLING

People buy from those they like, trust and respect. Sales will come. Focus on the person, building the relationship and serving them to the highest possible standard.

These are just five ideas – you probably can come up with fifty-five more. Your challenge is to find ways to be relevant, helpful and available to your customers.



Henry Ford

"You can do anything if you have enthusiasm"

Service Recovery

The First Step to Success – FAILURE

"Failure" said Henry Ford, "is simply the opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently."

Take Ford's approach to failure. Follow his advice when you – or your staff slip up:

- > Turn failure into a learning experience. Ask yourself or your staff: "What did I learn from the experience?" What worked and what didn't? "How can we do it better next time?"
- > Merge expectations with reality. The key to recovering from the occasional error is honest assessment of the risk. Don't paint an overly rosy picture of what happened or of what you will need to do to recover.

- > Make confession risk-free. Don't assume that your staff know that it's ok to own up to their mistakes. They may hide their errors because they fear the consequences. Tell them that hiding errors only compounds the damage.

Create an award for the most spectacular failure. Encourage staff to bring their errors to light, and hand out a small reward or gift certificate redeemable at a local coffee shop. When staff see that you are serious about wanting to hear about the mistakes, they will become less afraid to admit them.

KEY IDEA

Don't reward staff for making errors unless they can also tell you and others what they did to fix the mistakes and how they plan to avoid making similar errors.

