

#78: Ideas & Inspirations

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Words of wisdom

There is no such thing as can't, only won't. If you're qualified all it takes is a burning desire to accomplish, to make a change. But you can't blame others or society in general. It all comes from your mind. When we do the impossible we realise we are special people.

JAN ASHFORD

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.

- Nov 3 Satisfying Customers
- Nov 10 Correct Your Mistakes Quickly
- Nov 17 Surround Yourself with Good People
- Nov 24 Customer Service Goals for 2009



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



Companies who cut training in a crisis are risking their future STEVE HART

"While some organisations are reacting to the current economic climate by reducing training the more enlightened are taking a longer term view."

In a feature published in the New Zealand Herald the question was discussed in some depth whether or not to reduce training in the current climate.

The writer Steve Hart had listened to a number of successful companies both large and small and had probed their views on the future of their commitment to training.

The message from them all was clear. If you reduce or postpone training you do so at your peril. Training is no longer a nice thing to do, it has a direct impact on productivity and therefore costs by:

- > Improving sales
- > Reducing supervision
- > Improving quality
- > Building confidence

The coming year will bring real challenges to the bottom line for many small and medium size businesses.

Instead of looking to cut costs in the area of staff development, look at what training you can do to improve the overall effectiveness of your business.

In particular the area of customer service. The feeling or emotional reaction that a customer has to a business is the result of the human interaction – the relationship between the business personality and its customer.

This is what service is about. Elsewhere in this issue of Ideas & Inspirations there is a story about some customer research recently conducted in Auckland that clearly demonstrates the power of personal and human interaction in building rapport and a loyal customer base.

Training in all skills, but in particular those skills which directly impact in the relationships with customers mark the difference between survival and failure over the next eighteen months.

The objective of every business must be to create relationships between staff and customers that are the reflection of an emotional bond where loyalty and creating a positive experience are the key elements.

Editors Insight

Can you hear me?

Are you listening to your customers? Are you empowered to act effectively on their behalf? Any organisation worth its salt can listen to its customers—what you do with the information is what sets the great ones apart.

THERE ARE TWO WAYS YOU CAN "LISTEN" TO YOUR CUSTOMERS:

- > Today successful brands use active listening to monitor social media and respond when appropriate. "If someone says something about us, say something back!"
- > The next step is actionable listening. The difference here is that those listening, respond positively because they are empowered to make changes within their organisation, on their customers' behalf.

THE POINT: To successfully engage in actionable listening, an organisation must make an investment not only in monitoring tools but in providing infrastructure changes that back-up lip-service with speedy and effective results.

Then each person who is in contact with the customer must learn to use these tools and to be proactive in their application.

Survival is going to depend on how well we listen and how well we act on what we hear.

This is the last printed issue of *Ideas and Inspirations for 2008*. We wish you all a very safe and happy Christmas and summer holiday. 2009 is going to be a challenging year for New Zealand business. *Ideas & Inspirations* is dedicated to providing the support and motivation that will assist our readers in the year ahead.

Ideas

Winners & Losers

October 2007 – New Zealand was in mourning

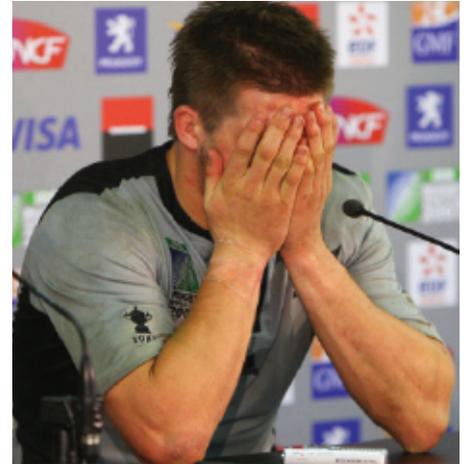
The New Zealand media were conducting post mortems, raking over the details of what was perceived to be a national disaster. There were calls for heads to roll. Likewise at parties, in staff cafeterias and at the family dinner table the single topic of conversation was the All Blacks loss to France at Cardiff.

In rugby as in many sports New Zealand performs above its weight, commanding respect with its position in world rankings.

So why is it in the most important ranking of all, the rankings that effect our standard of living and the future standard of living of our children and grandchildren that as we drop towards the bottom of the OECD table, we do not call for heads to roll.

It's great when we do well in sport but we need to do equally well in business.

We must work to raise our comparative rankings and collectively as a nation aim towards being at the top of the OECD ladder.



Innovative thinking, commitment, coupled with enthusiasm to become a winner in our individual jobs and vocations will move us towards this goal.

The lessons of the World Cup must be applied to everything else that we do as a nation.

Communication Bloop

"Faking it" when you forget someone's name

If you don't remember someone's name, you probably weren't concentrating when you heard it for the first time. But it's common and nothing to be embarrassed about, says etiquette expert Letitia Baldrige. "You just have to have the courage to admit it when you've forgotten," she says.

HERE'S WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF IN THIS DIFFICULT SITUATION:

- > Admit that you've forgotten the person's name by making an apology. "Please forgive me, I've forgotten your name." Don't act overly embarrassed; instead, try injecting a little humour into the situation.
- > When you are first introduced, imagine the person is the CEO. You're less likely to forget their name that way.
- > Repeat the name at least twice in the first few seconds. Say it as many times as possible during the initial conversation.
- > As you shake hands and talk to someone at a function, glance at their name tag. Focus on one thing with each glance: first name,



last name, company name. After a few glances you'll have etched the information in your mind.

- > When you hear a name for the first time, imagine it written on letterhead or announced over a p.a system.
- > After you finish talking, take a few notes on the back of the contact's business card, such as date and place you met, pet projects, mutual acquaintances. It will help glue the name in your memory.

We hope that these ideas will help in the future.

Inspirations

Keeping Afloat in a Changing Economy



- > Reinvent Your Business
- > Develop New Products
- > Contact Former Customers
- > Contact Competitors
- > Call Former Prospects
- > Multiple Revenue Streams

Running a business is always a risk. It can feel like being caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place. What can you do when things get tough? How can you get ahead when your business is beginning to become a burden. Here are some strategies to consider:

REINVENT YOUR BUSINESS:

You don't have to be a venture-backed high-tech company to reassess your business model. The smaller and leaner your business, the faster you can change gear and move into action.

STRENGTHS:

Take a long, hard look at your strengths, weaknesses and markets. If you've been selling products online, could they sell offline? If you're not selling online, why aren't you?

DEVELOP NEW PRODUCTS OR SERVICES:

Don't guess what customers want. Analyse your existing sales and talk to living, breathing prospects. What do they need? What can you provide? What's the best way to deliver solutions to them? What's going to bring in the most profit?

CONTACT FORMER CUSTOMERS:

Don't assume that a customer who stopped buying from you in the past will never buy from you again. Customers' needs and circumstances change, just as yours do. The customer who went with a lower-priced competitor may be dissatisfied with the quality or service and be receptive to a call from you today.

CONTACT COMPETITORS OF PRESENT OR FORMER CUSTOMERS:

If a company needs what you sell, there's a good chance their competitors do too. Industry

groups, seminars, and friends in the industry can all help you identify likely prospects. If the people you meet don't need your services, ask if they can put you in touch with someone at their company who could.

CALL FORMER PROSPECTS:

The bigger a business, the slower they are to move. The project that was put on indefinite hold last year, may become urgent now. Or, some other project the company is working on may be right for you. So touch base periodically. The more recently you've contacted a client, the more likely they'll be to remember your name – and your phone number – when they are ready to buy.

DEVELOP MULTIPLE REVENUE STREAMS:

That's corporate speak for a concept that's as old as the hills: find more ways to make money. For instance, consider licencing intellectual property, selling advertising space in your catalogue, renting direct mail lists, or performing services for other companies that you have developed for your own use.

Write it down and look at the numbers. What are the easiest ways to maximise your profits? What should you be doing longer term to ensure your business grows and prospers? Revise your business plan based on your answers, then start to work your plan.

How You Can Profit From Pain

Every company under the sun (irrespective of industry (whether it's health and holidays through to transport and cleaning) is in the business of solving its customer's problems.

It's widely accepted amongst marketers that 'pain' is usually a greater driver of consumer behaviour than pleasure. Most of us can take or leave pleasure, depending on the circumstance, but pain can only be tolerated for so long.

Therefore, offering to solve your customer's problems should be at the core of your marketing efforts, from headline through to call-to-action.

Here's one formula you can use to structure the message in some of your advertisements, flyers, websites and brochures...

- 1.** Begin with a problem. For example, one popular headline reads: "Are You Ashamed of Smells In Your Home?" Stating a problem up front builds empathy with the reader, and asking a question gets commitment either way.
- 2.** Next, help your audience to identify why they still have this problem.
- 3.** Then help your potential customer to imagine how life would be different when you have solved their problem. Paint a picture. Use a testimonial. Tell a story.
- 4.** Now offer the solution; mentioning the problem in the solution pitch.
- 5.** Finally, tell the prospective customer what to do now. Be specific. Tell them to call, phone, fax, send in the coupon...

REMEMBER: *People like to discuss their problems. But even more, they like discussing how they solved that problem. So if you're offering an effective solution at a good price (delivered with great customer service), you can't go wrong.*

Key Service Skills



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

The KiwiHost Key Service Skills course is the essential first step to inspiring a passion for customer service in every corner of your business.

Check out when the Key Service Skills workshop is running in your region through November, December, January and February.

LOCATION	DATES	
Auckland	18/11/08	12/02/09
Hamilton	03/12/08	10/02/09
Thames	24/11/08	28/01/09
Tauranga	19/11/08	11/12/08
New Plymouth	25/11/08	
Palmerston North	29/01/09	
Masterton	18/02/09	
Napier	02/12/08	24/02/09
Wellington	18/11/08	25/02/09
Nelson	27/02/09	
Christchurch	25/11/08	27/01/09
Dunedin		09/12/08
Invercargill	28/11/08	05/12/08

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Bring a Friend

At Ideas & Inspirations we recently worked on a research project that investigated what motivated people to visit an Auckland CBD retail organisation.



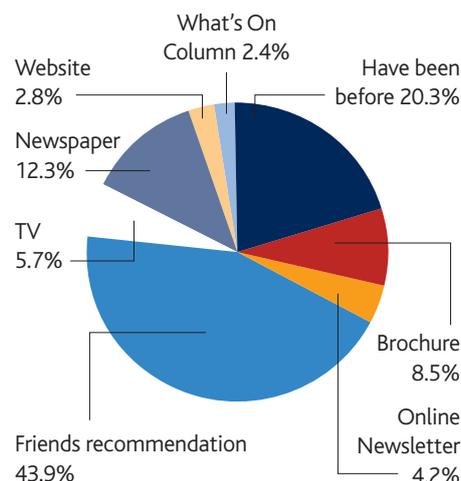
The results were fascinating. Nothing new was discovered. All that occurred, was reinforcement of what every good retail marketing executive is already aware of.

During the week of the project 6500 potential customers visited the business in question. Researchers collected 1400 exit questionnaires. The response rate of 20% provided data which clearly identified what drove people into this destination.

CUSTOMERS WERE ASKED AMONGST OTHER QUESTIONS:

How did you find out about us?

THEY ANSWERED AS FOLLOWS:



The single largest group was 43.9% and stated that "Friend Recommendation" was how they found out about the store.

When we read this data we asked why is it that businesses of all types still ignore this fact. "Word of mouth" is the most significant and critical factor that encourages potential customers to visit a particular business.

The business has been around for seven years and continues to grow its customer base on the back of its existing customers.

Everyone who walks into this business is seen by management as having the potential to comeback but also to bring a friend.

We continue to read and hear about customers who have had bad experiences with either products or services. These businesses fail to effectively address the concerns of their customers and then wonder why their business is failing.

Anyone in a customer service business is well aware that the customer is becoming more demanding and rightly so.

So if you want to weather the storm, make sure that every customer with whom your organisation has contact, will want to come back and is so enthusiastic about the experience that they bring a friend.

FEEL LIKE SCREAMING?

It's time to find out why

The 2008 KiwiHost/JRA Customer Service Pulse is again being run, to find out how kiwi's rate at customer service visit the KiwiHost website and click on the survey link

www.kiwihost.co.nz



NEW ZEALAND'S CUSTOMER SERVICE EXPERTS

