



#82: Ideas & Inspirations

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Words of wisdom

"In the world of internet customer service, its important to remember that your competitor is only one mouse click away."

Service Tips:

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 service 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.

Here are the latest Service tips from KiwiHost:

- Lets play the price is right
- Make them feel welcome
- Areas of excellence
- Giving Attention
- Be a Resource



To listen go to our website www.kiwihost.co.nz and click on: Service Tips.

Why consistency is the backbone of good customer service

We expect rugby referees to be consistent so that each team gets a fair deal. Children expect parents to be consistent because it gives them a sense of security. Your customers desire consistency for exactly the same reasons – and when you're in the car and auction business, 'reliability' is an important brand value.

In late 2007, early 2008 Turners Auctions conducted a countrywide mystery shopping campaign of all the company's 18 branches around the country. Responses from the mystery shoppers suggested that service needed to be more consistent.

Human Resources Manager Sarah McKenzie says the company felt that consistent service was important for their public and trade customers. All customers need to know what kind of experience they could expect to receive, no matter which branch they walked in to.

"We had discussions with KiwiHost and from the outset they made an effort to understand our business and to adapt to our needs. They worked with us from the start and even when internal changes resulted in delays, they stayed in touch.

"KiwiHost also attended our national management team meeting to help our managers understand what we were trying to

do. Achieving management buy-in was a very important part of the process," says Sarah.

Turners Auctions made the decision to roll out customer service training across the board, from the executive team, managers and sales, through to operational and frontline support staff. "We wanted the same level of service for our customers throughout each level of the organisation and all our branches around the country," says Sarah.

"And when it came time to push the button, we needed the job done in a short time frame and KiwiHost were up to it, carrying out training in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch."

Sarah says KiwiHost ran their Key Service Skills day-long workshop, but were flexible in making minor adjustments to fit Turners needs. "The training was adapted to be relevant to our business, using examples and scenarios that our people could relate to.

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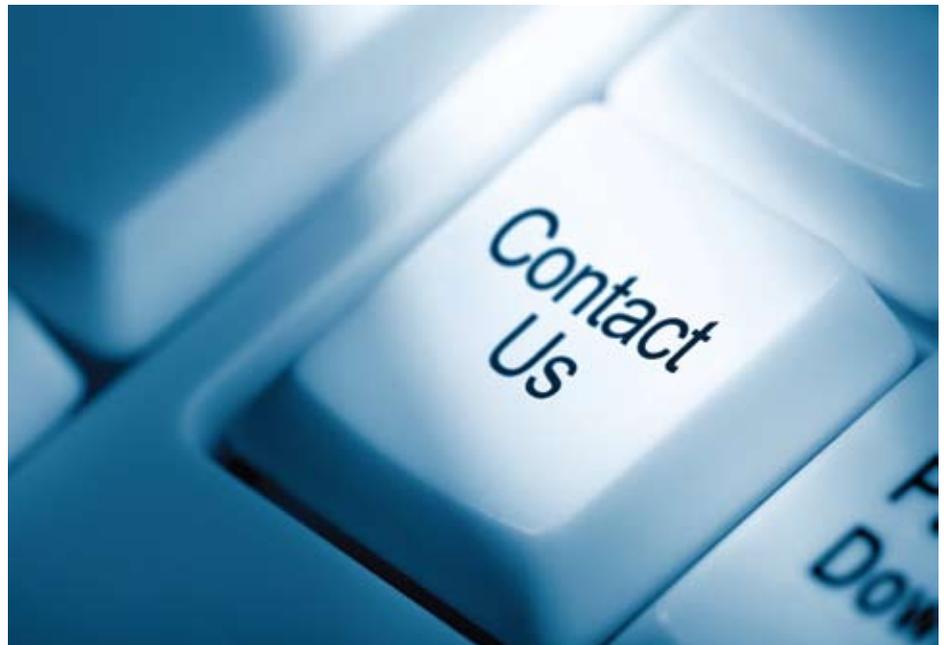
"We thought our more senior staff might be resistant because they've been there and done that, but surprisingly they got a lot out of it and were very pleased with the outcome. We also expected some reluctance from our operations staff because we thought they wouldn't like the idea of having to talk to customers, but their response has been the most enthusiastic."

"We've had operational staff come up to management to thank them for putting the training on. Their feedback is that it's made a difference to how they do their jobs, and we've actually seen real changes in people. Outcomes have been uniformly positive," says Sarah.

Although buying a car at an auction comes with an 'as is, where is' condition attached – the company runs car auctions, general goods auctions and damaged vehicles auctions – customer service is becoming increasingly important.

"More than half of Turners Auction's customers are from the general public and many of them will not have experienced an outcry auction before and will not have the same level of knowledge as a car dealer. They need to know what to do, what to look for and how the auction works, as the process is fast paced and can be intimidating. Many will ask questions about the merits of one type of vehicle over another or whether they will end up buying a car if they scratch their nose during the auction – and all our people need to be able to respond to that."

"We're not in the 'take it or leave it' business. It's about helping our customers understand the process, make more informed decisions and for us to deliver a consistently high level of customer service to get customers coming back next time they want to buy or sell a car because they understand the value of what we offer here that they can't get elsewhere," says Sarah.



Avoid this common email inquiry mistake

A golden rule of customer service is to be available to your customers, even online – especially online, now that 97% of people use the internet for research before making a buying decision.

How often have you clicked on the 'contacts' link of a website and up pops an automatic response form. So far so good, except it doesn't give any particular person's email address and there aren't any contact details on the page – such as names, telephone numbers and addresses.

Instead you're confronted by this box that requires you to enter your email address and your inquiry. After you push the button, you're left with the feeling that your email has just slipped down a black hole never to be seen again.

What about my privacy? Will my email address be protected? Who gets my inquiry? Are they qualified to handle it? And here's the clincher, most of the time you will never hear back.

If you visit the KiwiHost New Zealand website at www.kiwhihost.co.nz and click on the contacts

page, you're given a choice. You can email the company through the website, or pick up the phone and personally call any number of head office contacts, not to mention a list of franchisee owners around New Zealand (complete with photograph and profile).

That's availability.

"There should be a process and a person responsible for online inquiries," says KiwiHost New Zealand's Managing Director Jared Brixton. "Like all technology, online inquiry facilities cannot be fully trusted, so you should test the technology regularly to make sure everything is working."

"The internet, like automated telephone systems, are a tool that we can use to save money and time while making life easier for the customer, provided they're used properly and your people are trained to respond appropriately."

Don't leave customer service to the techies, put a human face on it.

Sign Up and Win

SIGN UP TO THE ELECTRONIC KIWIHOST IDEAS & INSPIRATIONS NEWSLETTER and go into the draw to win your choice of any one of the Effective Series Workbooks. These self-paced self-learning workbooks foster development and improve staff performance.

To sign up visit www.kiwhihost.co.nz

Winners will be announced in the next hard copy of Ideas & Inspirations.

Congratulations to last issues winner Sonya Mclsaac from Spotless Services.



National Training Courses

KEY SERVICE SKILLS

A dynamic fresh new course from KiwiHost that will keep customers loyal when you empower your staff with core customer service techniques and a "Can Do" attitude from KiwiHost. The KiwiHost course is the essential first step to inspiring a passion for customers in every corner of your business. Participants will learn to communicate effectively, understand the customers importance, understand why first impressions count, listen actively and handle complaints. The workshop provides staff of any business or organisation with grounding in the concepts of professional customer service



Key Service Skills

	MAR	APR	MAY
Auckland	24	27	
Waikato	9	20	
Bay of Plenty	16	21	
Taranaki		20	
Central	31		5
Napier & Hastings		20	
Gisborne	16		
Wellington		21	
Canterbury		19	
Otago	18		26
Southland	18	14	18

Learning Outcomes

This workshop will enable the participant to

- > Communicate effectively.
- > Understand that the customer is the lifeblood of the company.
- > Avoid assumptions and change customer perceptions for the better.
- > Give the customer a quality experience and demonstrate how that benefits everybody.
- > Meet, greet and remember names and faces.
- > Listen actively and ask open questions.
- > Handle complaining customers and solve service related problems.
- > Recognise who the customer is, both internally and externally.

Duration 1 day

ADVANCED CUSTOMER SERVICE

A challenging workshop, which will motivate participants with customer service experience to expand their skills in dealing with a wide range of customer interactions, by developing an understanding of what the customer wants and expects. The workshop also includes training on how to add value to transactions and how to build a customer ladder of loyalty making sure that the customer returns.



Advanced Customer Service

	MAR	APR	MAY
Northland	26		
Auckland	17	15	18
Waikato	16	27	
Bay of Plenty	3	22	
Taranaki		22	
Central	3	28	
Napier & Hastings		27	
Wellington	17	14	
Nelson	25		6
Canterbury	30		11
Otago	24		10
Southland	16	15	19

Learning Outcomes

This workshop will enable the participant to

- > Help them to understand 'how and why' their role is important.
- > Empower them with techniques to turn all good and bad customer service scenarios into gold.
- > Give them strategies to turn problem, angry and difficult customers into happy ones.
- > Enable each person to complete a self- analysis of their service attitude and skills, to build empathy.
- > Identify the four levels of customer expectation.
- > Show them how to achieve great first impressions.

Duration 1 day



PROFESSIONAL TELEPHONE SKILLS

The drive for greater productivity, systemisation of businesses, cost cutting and environmental changes such as traffic snarl ups have only increased the importance of the telephone as a business tool – more and more business is being done over the phone; but few businesses have equipped their staff to cope with the demands, pressures and opportunities that the telephone offers. Professional Telephone Skills has been substantially updated and improved to equip business for a telecommunication driven world, and to develop participant's understanding of the telephone as a customer service tool.

Professional Telephone Skills

	MAR	APR	MAY
Northland			28
Auckland	23		11
Waikato	11	22	
Bay of Plenty	4	20	
Taranaki		21	
Central		14	
Napier & Hastings			4
Gisborne	17		
Wellington	10	7	12
Nelson	19		
Canterbury	23		18
Otago	31		20
Southland	17	20	10

Learning Outcomes

This workshop will enable the participant to

- > Understand that the telephone is a vital element toward achieving professional customer service.
- > Have meaningful and pleasant interaction with the caller and offer excellent service and help.
- > Be positively aware of the need for clarity, good pronunciation, language, tone and attitude.
- > Be able to gain rapport with callers and develop positive communication links.
- > Be able to listen, use open questions and clarify the caller's needs.
- > Questioning techniques; effective listening
- > Correctly identify the caller
- > Being able to say 'no' and keeping the caller happy.

Duration 1 day

MANAGING SERVICE IN YOUR BUSINESS

Leadership and attitude drive the customer service focus of every business. The only difference between competing businesses is the quality of the customer service each provides. Consistency of delivery is vital to every service organisation. It is the responsibility of those who lead customer service teams to coach, guide, develop and monitor their teams to ensure that consistency of quality service is achieved. Participants in this workshop will be given tools and processes that will allow them to effectively and successfully manage and lead a team in a service environment.

Managing Service In Your Business

	MAR	APR	MAY
Auckland	11		
Wellington	9/23		
Canterbury			5

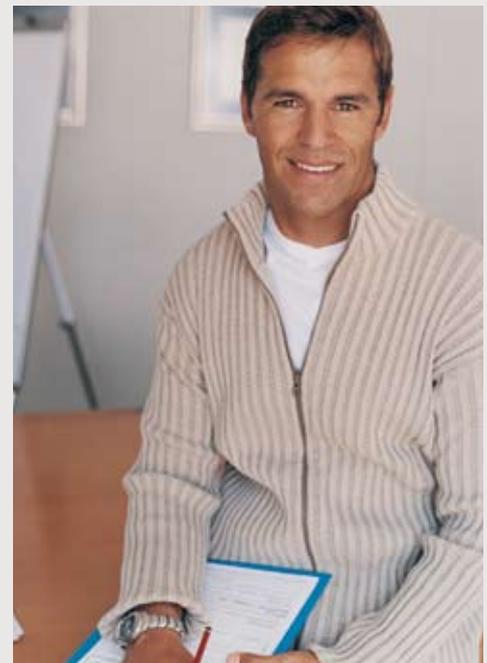
Learning Outcomes

This workshop will enable the participant to

- > Understand the role of the manager/supervisor.

- > Understand the concept of 360 degree feedback, how it relates to Services Management - Practices and how it can help personal improvement, strengths and potential.
- > Be able to write performance service standards, how to communicate these to staff and be able to undertake a performance review.
- > Know how to initiate performance improvement strategies.

Duration 2 Days [non-consecutive]



KIWIHOST

NEW ZEALAND'S CUSTOMER SERVICE EXPERTS

NEW ZEALAND'S CUSTOMER
SERVICE EXPERTS
PHONE 0800 801 233
WWW.KIWIHOST.CO.NZ



Never Blame, Defend or Explain

When dealing with customer feedback, never blame, defend or explain.

And here are some additional thoughts on this topic...

Last week my wife and I had dinner at one our usual haunts. After giving some feedback to our server about one item I ordered that was less than satisfactory, I was dismayed at his response.

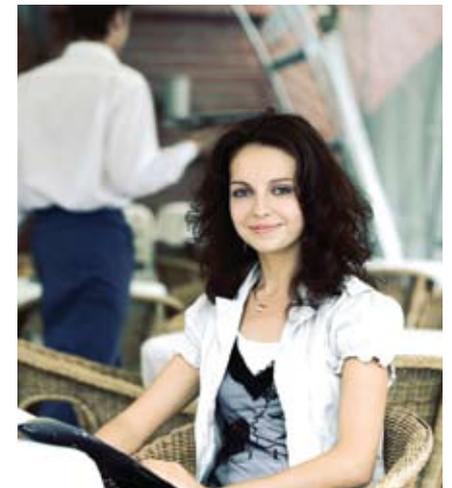
He was very nice but he launched into a lengthy explanation of how the food was prepared. And then he blamed the corporate office for the problem. Finally, he suggested I contact the corporate office directly because they'd be much more likely to listen to a customer than an employee.

Aside going TMI (too much information) on me, he wasted my time. I had no interest in hearing all that. What I wanted was simple:

1. An apology because the food did not meet my expectation
2. Assurance that he would get my feedback to the right people
3. Ask me if there was anything he could do to make it right.

That's it. That's all I wanted. And that's what most customers want. Anything else just wastes time and makes it more likely that customers will stop offering feedback. Or they'll stop being a customer. Either way the company and the customer lose.

Kevin Stirtz
Amazingserviceguy.com



Taking it on the chin may be good for profits

We're living in the age of conversation. Social media like Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook mean customers are more connected than ever and they're talking to each other about your products and services – the good news is that it's possible for companies to join that conversation, provided they don't suffer from a glass jaw.

"By glass jaw, I mean that the company has to be confident that what they're selling – including their customer service, support and guarantees – will stand up under scrutiny," says Colin Kennedy of Iron Road Communications.

"The way to join the conversation, so to speak, is to offer customers a facility on your website or in Facebook to rate your products and your performance so that people visiting your site can view these unbiased and unvarnished ratings."

Research reveals that 90% of consumers online trust recommendations from people they know; 70% trust opinions of unknown users (Econsultancy, July 2009).

"In another study, MarketingExperiments tested product conversion with and without product ratings by customers. Conversion nearly

doubled, going from 44% to 104% after the same product displayed its five-star rating (MarketingExperiments Journal, July 2007).

"79% of online UK retailers surveyed reported that the main benefit of consumer-generated rating and reviews was that they improved site conversion rates (eMarketer)."

Far from impersonalising society, social media has exponentially increased the power of word of mouth. It puts trusted information at the fingertips of people quickly and conveniently.

"That's very valuable in a time poor society. The reason social media is so popular is that it allows people to connect quickly, conveniently and in their own time. Those same drivers will influence their buying decisions," says Colin.

Colin Kennedy is the principal of Iron Road Communications, a marketing communications company that produces marketing plans, strategies and compelling copy for companies in Australia and New Zealand with something to shout about, who want to influence their customer's buying decisions in an age of low trust and word of mouth dominance (colin.kennedy@ironroad.co.nz).

Don't forget about our New Programmes!

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS

Difficult people present everything from the nuisance, an embarrassment to a challenge or possibly a real threat to any individual and any business.

TELEPHONE SELLING SKILLS

The skills of telephone selling are specialised, and excellence in these skills provides a strong and valuable basis for business success and individual opportunity.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Is time management; an illusion, an elusive ideal or a learnable skill?

In a time where the reality is the need "to do more with less" what are the secrets of the effective, productive management of time.

Please contact your local KiwiHost representative to see if these workshops are running in your area or for more information!

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New Realities

Customers are now using more channels with more frequency when they seek service from a company. They value the advantage of increased choice, but don't understand or accept degradations in service quality as a necessary consequence of that benefit. Quite simply, customers want service that is excellent, regardless of which channel is used, and that provides a high degree of continuity in the conversation over time and across channels.

"Customer service is the new face of the company," explains Becky Carroll, Senior Consultant, Peppers & Rogers Group. "Every touch with the company says something about the brand. Every interaction will either reinforce the brand, or diminish it. And, now more than ever before, the customer service department is the area where most touches occur." When customers encounter positive marketing messages but experience negative service encounters, it is the latter that will dominate, shaping their viewpoint of the company and influencing their likelihood to purchase again or make a referral to a friend or colleague.

As a consequence, "a new competitive differentiator is emerging," notes Martha Rogers, Ph.D., founding partner, Peppers & Rogers Group. "And it is customer service. In a world where product, price, place and promotion are increasingly similar, the quality of the customer's experience is becoming a strategic lever in achieving business success."

Specifically, incorporating initiatives in their plans to improve cross-channel interactions is somewhat or considerably important for 78 percent of companies, and for good reason. Just one excellent channel experience with a brand, regardless of channel, has a large impact on the customer's relationship. Unfortunately, just one "poorly performing channel can pull down

the customer relationship almost as much as if the average standard slips across all channels." In particular, the quality of the contact centre experience and the website experience are both significantly correlated with the attitude toward the brand in addition to future purchase intention.

"It all boils down to a realisation that there are two kinds of companies when it comes to customer service," explains Rogers. "On the one hand, there exist companies that view customer service as a necessary evil—something that the business is required to do but, in an ideal world, wouldn't be necessary if employees were adept at doing things right and satisfying customers.

On the other hand, there are more enlightened companies that recognise this fact: every time a customer takes the time to make contact and the company has her or his attention, that is a miraculous moment. Such moments need to be optimised, because the sum total of those moments equals the customer's experience with the company, which in turn determines the current and future value of that individual to the business." The objective for the first category of companies is to minimise costs and to maximise the value of their products. In contrast, the second category recognises that it is because we have customers that we have products.

NEW REALITIES DEMAND NEW RESOURCES

Source: 2008 Peppers & Rogers Group.

The new realities of today's multichannel environment require thoughtful and innovative responses from companies seeking the strategic competitive advantage that arises from consistent and superior customer service.

NEW REALITIES

NEW RESPONSE

Customers can (and will) use a mix of channels for service



Provide all channels to all customers, to accommodate changing situational needs

Customers will hop from one channel to another, even within a single service request



Ensure the continuity of the conversation across channels, to demonstrate an integrated response

Customers' service expectations are increasing



Continuously assess customers' satisfaction with their interactions, and use that knowledge to improve processes

Customers' contacts with the company are increasingly through service encounters



Invest in customer service, to maximize the value from every customer conversation

Customers are more stressed and busy than ever before



Make it easy and be responsive, by enabling self-service and assuring that information is consistent and correct

