

#83: Ideas & Inspirations

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Come rain or flood, it's the Tasman District Council customer services team on the frontline

Coping with Civil Defence emergencies, calls from ratepayers who want to know what's on at the movies and some other types of calls it wouldn't be appropriate to mention, are just some examples that demand an extraordinary level of professionalism from the customer services team at the Tasman District Council.

Words of Wisdom

"The single most important thing to remember about any enterprise is that there are no results inside its walls. The result of a business is a satisfied customer."

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:

- Going the extra mile
- What do customers want?
- Avert trouble with customers
- Learn to let it go
- Pay attention to customers



To listen go to our website www.kiwihost.co.nz and click on: service tips.



Customer Services Manager, Suzanne Westley, says the customer services team deals with what some in the customer services industry call 'hostage customers', so called because they have no choice but to deal with their local council.

"There is only the council," says Suzanne. "And for some people that is frustrating, and for that reason our team has to perform far and beyond the call of duty. That's why we decided to call in KiwiHost for some advanced telephone skills training, so we could maintain our very high standards."

Suzanne says making sure that inquiries – from the routine to the bizarre – are dealt with efficiently and with minimum delay, so as not to hold up other callers, makes for a very demanding and stressful environment that nevertheless requires high standards of professionalism all of the time.

"The thing I most liked about the approach of KiwiHost's Mandy Gilmore was that she

actually came and spent time with myself and the 22 other members of the customer services team so she could understand our business properly.

"She targeted our needs and listened to what we had to say.

"My team's feedback was that Mandy presented a wonderfully clear and practical message, which was useful. People liked her positive, 'can do' language. We also liked KiwiHost's training on how to use open and closed questions.

"KiwiHost got us analysing our own performance and our own values. The training book is also a very handy tool.

"I've heard some of my team on the telephone using the skills that KiwiHost taught us – they are trying new things and there's been a definite improvement in their listening skills. Overall performance is up," says Suzanne.

10 Telephone Tips

We all know the story... it costs 5 times as much to bring in a new customer, than to keep an existing one. When people become your customer, they want to be loyal. So, why do they leave? Most of the time, they leave because of small oversights and lack of attention to plain, old customer service.

When customers call on the phone, we are provided with a tremendous opportunity to reinforce and grow the relationship. It makes good (economic) sense to take the extra time and effort to make these calls as meaningful and service oriented as possible. Attention to customer service will go a long way in helping you to satisfy your customers and make them feel as if they are truly special.

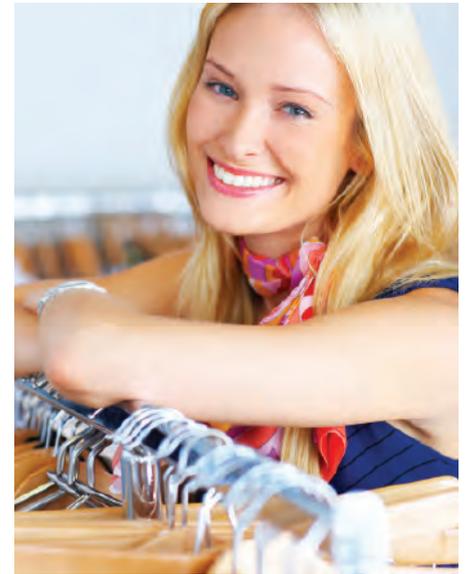
1. Always tell your customer what you CAN do for them. Don't begin your conversation by telling them what you CAN'T do.
2. Allow irate customers to vent. Do not interrupt them or start to speak until they have finished having their say.
3. Diffuse anger by saying "I'm sorry or "I apologise."
4. Use your customer's name at different points in the call.
5. Make certain that your "solution" to the customer's problem is acceptable to them. Get their approval and agreement.
6. Always conclude each call with a "thank you" or a verbal message of appreciation for their business.
7. Make certain that your tone of voice is in sync with your words. Remember, your tone of voice can completely contradict your message.
8. Listen attentively! There is nothing worse than asking an irate or troubled customer to REPEAT what they have just said.
9. Go the extra step by following up on your solution. Re-contact the customer to make certain that everything has been handled in a satisfactory manner, and that they are pleased with the outcome.
10. Remember to ask if there is anything else that you can do for your customer. Taking the time to ask the question often results in increased business and a more committed customer.

Say it with a smile!

"The smile is the kiss of the soul," said Minna Antrim, and it is impossible to disagree with this lovely statement. In fact one of the excellent qualities of a smile is that it doesn't cost anything but gives so much.

Smiling enriches the person who has received it but does not impoverish the one who gave it. It only lasts a moment, but it remains in the memory for a long time. The smile should be open and natural. Customers perceive a "pasted-on," superficial smile indifferently and even with suspicion: "What does he (she) want from me?"

Of course, it is necessary to remember that a smile is not appropriate with the customer who is upset. In this case it can cause negative reaction or even start a conflict: "I have problems and you are laughing," or, "I feel upset and all you do is just smile at me." It is much more to show compassion in your facial expression - be warm, sympathetic and attentive.



A smile is appropriate with regular clients sales professionals know well. How one can not smile at the sight of a happily married young couple with an adorable kid (and remember, every child is adorable to its parents)! When someone smiles at you, return the smile! It will help to establish an emotional contact.

NEW! KiwiHost Client Testimonials

NEW to the KiwiHost website is our "testimonials" page under the "About KiwiHost" menu item.

On our new testimonials page you'll find case studies from some recent in-house workshops. These articles delve into why companies such as Turners Auctions, Lexel Systems, and the Tasman District Council felt they needed to improve their customer service performance, and the results that KiwiHost helped them achieve.

In-House Workshops

All in-house workshops are tailored to issues pertinent to your business.

In-house workshops can also be customised. Customisation ranges from including your logo on workbook covers & certificates, to fully customised presentations where imagery and video content is modified to suit your requirements.

For more information about our in-house workshops phone **0800 801 233**.

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

Congratulations to last issue's winner Gary Mills from Air New Zealand Technical Operations.



How good do your customers REALLY think you are?

KiwiHost and JRA have completed the Customer Service Pulse survey for the 3rd year running. The full report is now available, and details New Zealanders' views and experiences of interacting with all types of New Zealand businesses. For the first time we're able to see comparative trends in how satisfied New Zealanders are with the level of customer service you are providing.

The results of the most recent survey indicate that while general satisfaction levels remain low, there has been a significant increase over the last 3 years. Our first survey found that only 33% of respondents were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied", in 2009 this rose to 54%.

Despite the positive trend, there is clearly room for improvement in all industries, with 46% of people having either neutral or negative experiences. As in previous surveys, we asked respondents about their levels of satisfaction in different industries within New Zealand. The results were consistent with the previous years' findings, with banks rating highly, and telecommunications rating very poorly.

3 FACTORS YOU CAN USE TO INCREASE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION.

The first two factors remain the same as in previous years: "listen to me and understand my needs" and "show a willingness to help me". Previously, the third factor was "take responsibility to ensure my needs are met", however the time poor nature of today's customers has resulted in this changing to "respond to me in a timely manner". The results of our research suggests that companies that get these 3 factors right will have more satisfied customers than their competitors.

When businesses do not deliver on these 3 elements of exceptional customer service, the result is a dissatisfied customer.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE KIWIHOST/JRA CUSTOMER SERVICE PULSE:

Email: marketing@kiwihost.co.nz or download the full report from kiwihost.co.nz



And the winners are...

Thanks to everyone who filled out the KiwiHost/JRA survey. Everyone who provided their details went into a draw to win an iPod shuffle.

The winners are...

Leslie Ash, Whangaparaoa

Sonja Williams, Paraparaumu

Cherie Arnott, Tawa

J Henderson, Auckland

De Coninck, Christchurch

When customer love turns to hate...

In today's society customers are finding more ways to report negative customer service experiences to others, and sharing them with a wider range of people than ever before - thanks to social networking websites, blogs and websites that offer a platform for customers to post reviews, experiences and complaints.

The results of the recent KiwiHost/JRA Customer Service Pulse Report of Findings indicates that New Zealanders are growing less tolerant of bad customer service experiences. Compared with previous reports, the number of people who complain to 10 or more people has increased and the number of people who never return to a business after a bad experience has increased - in fact, 78% of respondents indicated that after only one or two bad experiences they would never return to a business.

Another recent study asked these questions:

- Do customers hold a grudge after a bad experience?
- Does a strong relationship with the customer affect the strength of this grudge?

- Can a business recover from a love-turned-to-hate relationship?

The study found that after a bad service experience customers will hold a grudge, and that this is expressed by choosing to avoid a company. Over time the customer's desire to avoid a company after a bad-service incident increases. They also found that loyal, regular customers are much more likely to choose to avoid a company after a bad service experience, because they feel that their loyalty has been betrayed. Loyal customers will also hold a grudge for much longer.

Of the customers who complained online, 81% of them had first complained directly to the company. When nothing was done by the company to resolve the situation, the customer resorted to online complaining and avoiding the business.

A recovery can be made by the business to turn the hate-relationship back to love, but only if this is done in a timely manner.

So what does the customer expect from you? For the loyal customer often just a



sincere apology will do the trick. Depending on the situation modest compensation will also help. A new or infrequent customer will want some kind of financial compensation such as their money back, a product repaired or replaced etc.

A customer complaint is a gift - its an opportunity for you to repair a customer relationship, and the customer will love you for it.

SOURCES:

KiwiHost/JRA Customer Service Pulse - Report of Findings. May 2010.
Journal of Marketing. Vol 73, Nov 2009.

Don't forget about our New Programmes!

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS

Difficult people can be a nuisance, an embarrassment or a challenge.

Handled correctly, these situations are an opportunity for your organisation's reputation and customer service relationship to be seen in a positive way.

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 effective 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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If its not broken... fix it anyway!

I was talking with one of my friends who had just completed his IT degree when he told me that my business degree, which I completed a while ago, was now out of date.

I asked him to explain and he proceeded to give me an example. "Ok Nga, finish this statement 'if it's not broken...' ", to which I quickly replied "don't touch it".

He explained that the ending of this statement had changed and the new correct answer was 'If it's not broken... fix it!'

"Fix what?" I asked, "there is nothing to fix". He then convinced me that a paradigm shift had occurred regarding this proverb.

If it's not broken... fix it, because there are many other products and services out there which are also not broken but are continually being 'fixed' or improved.

Take the humble mobile phone for instance. Once upon a time it was just a phone, until it was 'fixed' or improved into a camera, and MP3 player, a GPS device, a PDA and a video camera.

SO WHAT ARE YOU FIXING?

Like the mobile phone there are always developments for us to make. Improving our time management, being a faster reader or updating our out of date degrees are examples of how we can fix ourselves.

I can hear some of you saying, 'I am working very well, thank you', and congratulations to you, however, so is the person next to you who may be improving their performance and skills in some manner and may one day be promoted ahead of you, or even take your position in a restructure.

Swiss watchmakers were the outstanding world market leaders and enjoyed a well-earned reputation. They were offered the opportunity to 'fix' their watches through quartz digital technology and declined.

The people offering the new digital technology took their new ideas to a

world watch convention where a Japanese company bought the rights and, as they say, the rest is history.

In fact these so-called technological upheavals in the 1970's and early 1980's and the consequential economic situation saw their number of employees fall from some 90,000 in 1970 to a little over 30,000 in 1984.

Don't be like that market leader. If you are the number one in your industry – fix it.

My work with leaders has shown me that leaders are always looking for ways to fix themselves. Good leaders also look for ways to improve the people they lead.

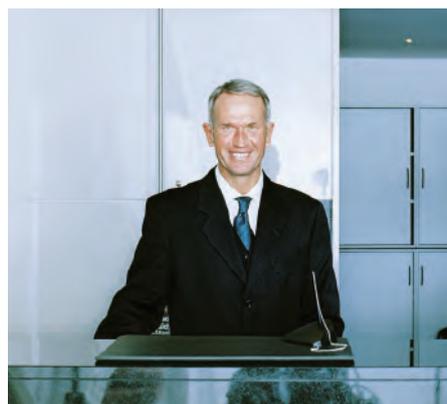
One of our Maori proverbs says "Ka pu te ruha ka hao te rangatahi". One translation says, "when the old net is worn out and cast aside, the new net is put into use".

One of the things that makes a net old and worn out is a lack of maintenance or improvement. Don't be like that net.

BY NGAHIHI O TE RA BIDOIS

Ngahi is available for national or international keynote speeches and workshops. Ngahi's presence and ancient wisdom will contribute to your modern solutions.

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Have faith in your front-line customer service staff

It is people that deliver great service, not companies. Some of the best customer service is delivered by companies which empower their customer service agents to think for themselves, act independently and be flexible. Nothing annoys customers more than a centre agent who is completely unable to deviate from an obviously pre-prepared script.



National Training Courses



KEY SERVICE SKILLS

Customers rate personal interactions miles ahead of any other feature in the buying experience – including convenience. Key Service Skills is 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. This workshop is the essential first step to inspiring a passion for customers in every corner of your business, and will provide staff of any business or organisation with grounding in the concepts of professional customer service.

This workshop will enable the participant to:

- > Communicate effectively.
- > Meet, greet and remember names and faces.
- > Listen actively and ask open questions.
- > 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.
- > Handle complaining customers and solve service related problems.

Duration: 1 Day



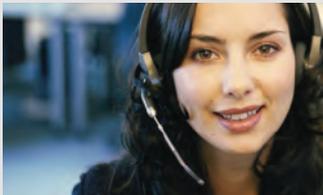
ADVANCED CUSTOMER SERVICE

Regardless of your business or the make-up of your staff, everyday your business is presented with opportunities to generate new customers and to retain and grow existing ones – well trained, professional staff will recognise those opportunities. Advanced Customer Service 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.

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 customer service scenarios into gold.
- > Give the 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.
- > Give great first impressions.

Duration: 1 Day



PROFESSIONAL TELEPHONE SKILLS

The drive for greater productivity, cost cutting and environmental changes have only increased the importance of the telephone as a business tool. 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 participants' understanding of the telephone as a customer service tool.

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, tone and attitude.
- > Be able to listen, use open questions and clarify the caller's needs.
- > Questioning techniques; effective listening.

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 provided. It is the responsibility of those who lead customer service teams to coach, guide and develop 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.

This workshop will enable the participant to:

- > Understand the role of the Manager/Supervisor.
- > Understand that 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.

Duration: 2 Days (non-consecutive)

National Training Schedule

KEY SERVICE SKILLS

Duration: 1 Day

	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV
Auckland	18	22		9
Waikato	24	14	20	25
Bay of Plenty	11		6	
Taranaki	17		12	
Palmerston North	31		27	
Wanganui				3
Napier & Hastings	17		14	
Wellington	18		20	
Nelson	26			25
Canterbury		14		23
Otago	18	22		3

ADVANCED CUSTOMER SERVICE

Duration: 1 Day

	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV
Auckland	17, 31 ^(NS)	15	14	16
Waikato	25	15	21	23
Bay of Plenty	10		5	
Taranaki	19		14	
Palmerston North	18		13	
Napier & Hastings		2		25
Gisborne			15	
Wellington	11	8	13	10
Nelson	5	16, 23 ^(B)		4
Canterbury	24	30		2
Otago		2	12	18

(NS) Course location is North Shore.

(B) Course location is Blenheim

PROFESSIONAL TELEPHONE SKILLS

Duration: 1 Day

	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV
Auckland	12	21		10
Waikato	23	16	19	24
Taranaki	18		13	
Palmerston North	11			24
Wanganui				16
Napier & Hastings				11
Gisborne			16	
Wellington	4	1	6	3
Nelson	12	24 ^(B)		11
Canterbury		7	20	16
Otago		8	21	23

(B) Course location is Blenheim

MANAGING SERVICE IN YOUR BUSINESS

Duration: 2 Days (non-consecutive)

	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV
Auckland	11			
Wellington		9		
Canterbury			12	
Bay of Plenty			12	
Other locations if requested				



KIWIHOST

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