



# ideas & inspirations

FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE PROFESSIONALS

From KIWIHOST

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## ideas

### ONE MORE DAY

This year we have been blessed with "One More Day." What about applying the "one more" principal to everything you do irrespective of your role in the business.

For example if you are a Manager give one more staff member a compliment before you leave work today. Notice one more thing that somebody did right today, comment on it and start a ripple effect that elevates workplace morale.

If you are a Salesperson, call one more customer today before you hang up the phone. Call another customer and ask about a problem you can help with or a need you can meet. You might not make a sale, but you will build a rapport.

If you are a Customer Service Person, give one more customer a special welcome. Look to do something special, go out of your way for one more person each day.

If you are somebody else, think of one more thing you could do today to make meaningful progress toward your goals. Who could you approach for advice? What timesaving idea could you implement? What one item could you cross off your to-do list? What deadline could you beat?

After all, time is one thing that you can't control. Everyone has the same number of hours in every day, the same number of days each year. The difference between success and mediocrity is knowing what to do with those hours and days. When you seize the opportunity to do one more thing, you will not only move yourself ahead but you will help someone else move ahead in their lives

## inspiration

### ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS

To make sure that you build a positive future you need to ask the following questions of yourself and answer them honestly:

- How is my type of business changing?"
- "Will our current customers still need our products or services next year and the year after?"
- "Do all of our clients know about all the products or services we sell?"
- "Do we suggest additional purchases to existing customers?"
- "Are there other ways to market that we aren't doing now?"
- "Are there things we don't sell now that would sell to our existing customers?"
- "What are our competitors doing that we're not doing?"
- "If we sell to consumers, could we sell the same or similar products or services to businesses?"
- "Can we increase prices?"
- "Could we increase business if we purchased some specific piece of equipment, applied for certification, or made some other change?"
- "How can we add value to our relationships with existing customers?"
- "What can we do that will make us stand out and stand above our opposition?"

## OUR HOT CROSS BUN STORY

This story is now 5 weeks old however it illustrates the importance in any service of always communicating effectively with staff.

On Easter Thursday at about 10.30am one of Ideas & Inspirations staff went into the local store of a bakery chain to purchase Hot Cross Easter Buns. The only buns on display had chocolate crosses. Being a traditionalist our staff member asked for "Real Hot Cross Buns" and was told that the chocolate cross ones were the only ones they had.

She reluctantly purchased the buns but as she walked out of the store she overheard another staff member telling staff to let customers know that "Real Hot Cross Buns" would be available at about midday.

We sat down for lunch and in telling the story our staff member brought out the buns. Another staff member commented that there was no fruit in the buns just chocolate chips.

This discussion about staff not being informed identified that "failure to communicate" as being one of the causes of most customers dissatisfaction.

This point was reinforced on the same evening. I was watching the Gordon Ramsey's Kitchen Disasters show where he was working hard to bring back to life "Bonaparts Restaurant" Bar. The business was a disaster.

The core issue was an owner who had little knowledge of what made the business "tick". Their lack of ability to communicate had brought the business to its knees. Gordon Ramsey did his best to change this attitude but failed.

Both of those situations send a strong message. Customer satisfaction is dependant on the information that those who serve have, and how they use it.

Examine your own communication practices – do your staff know there will be more "buns at midday." Do they know about "the menu" for the next day.

Preview your own practices and systems. Make sure that all the information a customer needs resides in the hearts and minds of all your staff. Then make sure they have the confidence to use it and to use it well.

## fishing tip

### IDEAS FOR FINDING NEW CUSTOMERS

Work your personal network:

Ask your friends if they know of people who can use your services, or people who may know others who could use your services. If your pricing structure will allow it, offer friends and business associates a finders fee for referrals that turn into jobs.

## SERVICE QUALITY IMPROVES WHEN CUSTOMERS ARE THE FOCUS

Research at American Express has shown that there are 10 key areas on which companies can concentrate to improve customer service delivery. A director of American Express suggests that there are 10 ways companies can focus to make sure customers receive the best possible services. These are:

1. **Meet the customer's expectations.** Customer expectations of service are usually formed on the basis of our considerations of:
  - Price: If customers pay more, they expect better service.
  - Experience with your company: The better job you do, the more the customer expects from you.
  - Experience with other companies: You can't avoid comparison with your competition.
  - Advertising claims and word-of-mouth: Tell them they'll get better service and they'll expect it.
2. **Reduce time.** Leisure time has dropped, so customers need faster service. Also, the greater the customer's perceived personal status, the better service he or she expects.
3. **Reduce the number of contacts.** The more people a customer has to talk to get, satisfaction, the less satisfied they are; often more than one is too many. Make frontline people as self-sufficient as possible.
4. **Give clear instructions.** If customers are required to perform some action to resolve their problem, make sure they understand what they have to do.
5. **Bridge the language gap.** Don't hit the customer between the eyes with company jargon. First interpret what customers are saying; then respond to them in their own language.
6. **Make the customer feel valued.** Never make the customer feel like a nuisance.
7. **Never make the customer feel at fault.** Customers aren't always right, but they are always the customer.
8. **Never embarrass the customer.**
9. **Optimise speed vs personal attention trade-off.** Often you can use technical advances to take care of some of the tasks, leaving front line personnel more time to spend with customers.
10. **Include quality of service as part of the employee job performance criteria.** Quantitative output is more easily measured than quality, but it's vital to measure the quality of service. You can count the calls telephone service people handle, but unless you also give them credit for the way they handle calls, you may actually be motivating them to provide poorer service.

Garfien, who develops worldwide marketing research programs and establishes and maintains research and development of customer satisfaction, says these areas require constant vigilance.

# inspiration

## EDITORS INSIGHT

As financial commentators, the Government, and the “experts” continue to discuss economic issues and they are increasingly using the “R” word. The result: Decision makers resigning themselves to lower sales and tighter margins.

Readers, don't be lead into this trap. Now is the time to analyse your business and look for ways to address the issues that may effect your business in the short term.

You are going to tell me that you have already done this. But so often we fall victim to two doctrines when we start to examine our business. Short-sightedness and Inertia

We think about and do what has always worked in the past. We dismiss ideas that others suggested because we believe they are unreasonable. It is easier to be safe as opposed to trying something different new and exciting.

This is the style of thinking that creates a rut. Remember “A rut is a coffin with the ends knocked out.”

Now is the time to climb out of the rut. Look at what you are doing through different eyes. Ask yourself and those who support you some critical questions. We have listed on this page some of the questions that every business should be asking.

Don't answer the question with an instant yes or no. Be specific. Identify, make estimates, put numbers to estimates. Then act on implementing the changes that will make a real impact on your business.

Do this methodically. Always remember that those who stumble are those who have lost sight of where they are going.

## THE HANDSHAKE

There is no single action in the business world that creates a connection with people faster than a handshake

A study by Dr. Allen Konopacki for the Incomm Center in Chicago concluded that a handshake produces “a higher degree of intimacy and trust within a matter of seconds. “Conversely, a poor handshake can send long-lasting negative messages which can hinder your ability to build positive business relationships.

A proper handshake conveys confidence, warmth and charisma. A poor handshake can send the message that you are unprofessional, disinterested and socially unskilled. Here are the dos and don'ts of a good handshake:

### **The perfect handshake:**

It begins with lots of eye contact and a brief, warm smile. Extend your arm with your hand perpendicular (thumb to the ceiling), neither dominant (palm down) nor submissive (palm up). Move your hand firmly into the other person's until the web between your thumb and forefinger are making solid contact. Firmly close your hand over the other person's hand for 1-2 seconds. Make a subtle, almost imperceptible up-down motion, then release the other's hand. Remember to keep your fingers together.

### **Don't:**

Crush the other person's hand. You're connecting, not competing

Keep your hand limp. The 'dead fish' handshake says 'dead fish personality'

Do the finger squeeze. This is a common style where you just bend your fingers over the other person's. It comes across as unprofessional, and sends the message that you don't care.

Pull away. If you briefly touch the other person's hand and pull away, the other person will feel rejected

The same rules apply for both men and women. Not sure of your handshake? Practice with a friend or family member. It's much too important to leave it to chance.