

Customer Service

Starts with a Smile



When it comes to running a business in this hectic, computer, blackberry, and cell phone-driven world of ours, sometimes it may be difficult to put your best foot forward.

Through spontaneous discussions with an out-of-town guest, a co-worker and a new client (all within 24 hours) the topic and importance of excellent customer service popped up. We all agreed that high quality customer service is the backbone to a successful business community... from buying merchandise through to ordering an item on the telephone.

As a customer entering a store, you want to know that you are valued. You took the time to choose a place of business with interest in either perusing for a future purchase or buying at least one item immediately. You expect that your presence will be acknowledged by a salesperson rather than ignored while he/she talks on the phone or to other salespeople. When they say, "How may I help you?" their first impression can make or break the sale.

You now have the choice to reply, "Thanks, I'm just looking" or something like "I've had my eye on that sweater in the window for a couple of weeks now, could you please tell me if you have my size?"

A responsible salesperson will make every effort to accommodate you. Then again, if the staff of the store has not been professionally trained, you may be turned off by a response such as "No, that's a size two and it wouldn't fit you."

A smart salesperson would have greeted you with a smile, and said, "The sweater in the window is our last one and it's a size two. However I have some similar styles and colours over here if you care to take a look." This is the beginning of a sales relationship, maybe even cultivating a long-term client who will return often and bring friends with them.

Good manners and seizing the opportunity to up-sell is important to any business owner. Training is critical and salespeople need to be trusted to act professionally when the owner is not present.

So the next time you go shopping what will you be looking for in customer service? If you work in any type of people-oriented business, wouldn't it be better to be treated with respect and made to feel comfortable when making your next purchase?

If you are a small or large business owner you might want to approach your Chamber of Commerce and or your local BIA and ask if they have training courses in customer service. If they don't, feel free to call or email me at womenwithvision@rogers.com (subject: customer service) and I will gladly connect you with a professional trainer who will come to your community and involve your staff in a customer service workshop.

A city, town or even a hamlet would not exist without its small businesses. A small company/store will not be in business long if people don't have a good experience... the word spreads like wildfire. A clear understanding of the make-it-or-break-it importance of first impressions is the keystone; whether it is the manager of a grocery store, a proprietor of a retail shop, the chef preparing a fabulous meal, or the newspaper person. Because without the positive first person contact having a good impact the whole experience is lost, even for those behind the scenes. A client never forgets good customer service.

It has been proven many times over: the easiest way to greet someone and break the ice is with a smile

* Correction: *A Wedding in Japan takes place in a Shrine not a Temple. Our apology for this unfortunate oversight. A Shrine is a place of faith and celebration; a Temple is a place of memorial.*



Lorraine Leslie
Founder/Publisher



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The feature women about whom I write, have traveled a long, winding road to success – each woman on her own journey; a journey that sometimes hasn't been smooth. These women open their hearts to inspire and motivate other women, of all ages, to follow their dreams and passions...