



BRIGHT IDEAS

TO KEEP YOUR CUSTOMERS
HAPPY... FROM

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Sales and Marketing

Ya gotta love the customers!

The National Training Council commissioned a survey of customers and managers so that they could establish ideal selection criteria for salespeople.

Customers and managers were asked to rank the desirable characteristics of salespeople.

The No. 1 spot was grabbed by *Basic liking for others - a genuine love for people*. Not product knowledge; not the ability to close hard and fast; not negotiating skills; but good old fashioned friendliness: friendliness in tone and word and deed.

A warm hearted manner seems the most fundamental secret for success in business.

Confucius say:
He who cannot
smile,
should not keep
shop!

How does the song go?

What the world needs now, is love sweet love. That's the only thing that there's just too little of.

It's an easy tune to hum in a karioke bar with warm wishes for the Bosnians to stop shooting each other for Christmas, but putting up with customers is another matter.

Loving the Tutsis in Africa is somehow easier than loving a customer whose kikuyu has run into the flower beds saying it's your fault for fertilising too much.

Loving your neighbour as much as you love yourself is really easy provided your neighbour isn't an angry customer whose tyres wore out quicker than you promised they would.

It might help if you look at your customers as if they are in pain—not A pain—but in pain.

Most people are in pain about something

A wayward child, a strained relationship, a family quarrel, a lover's spat, a nasty neighbour, a drug or alcohol dependent friend or relative, a bad report, and right at the top of the list—not enough money to do what they really want to do. There's a lot of pain out there.

Treat your customers as though they could be in pain and do what you can to ease it. You'll be amazed at the response.

And here's something to think about for the season of eating and drinking.

I was hungry and you sat around the lunch table and felt guilty about having so much to eat while you discussed my hunger. Thank you.

I was imprisoned and you rang up talk back radio and said I should have been hanged. Again, thanks.

I was robbed and left naked and you made smart alec remarks in the staff canteen about how much better I'd look in a sexy dress. Appreciated.

I was sick and you hugged your kids closer and hoped they wouldn't catch

it from me. Fair enough.

I was homeless and you said there were plenty of shelters for people like me and muttered something about finding a job. Good advice.

I was lonely and you walked past with your friends and didn't stop to say hello. I suppose you thought I would bite you for loose change. I guess I would have.

You seem so good; so well dressed; so well bred; so together; so

deserving of all the good things that have happened to you. And I don't mind that. I don't want to take it away from you. You're OK the way you are.

But I'm still very hungry, and lonely, and cold.

Bright Idea



Love a little more.

It's not an accident of the emotions.

It's an act of the will.



A manager is a good communicator

The next two points walk hand in hand. If management is all about good communication, then listening is its travelling companion.

Some organisations ask me to run public speaking seminars for their managers so they can communicate better with their staff. I run these programmes, covering a lot of territory and the changes are remarkable, but it might not be necessary for such a serious commitment. There are simple things anyone can do.

Being a good communicator does not mean that you have to be a convention speaker. You can type out your notes and read them to your staff at a regular meeting. You can even have someone else read them out.

The important thing is that you let your people know what is going on.

One of our clients Open Book Publishers has a meeting every Friday afternoon for all the staff. It's down tools for fifteen minutes at 3:00 every Friday to hear what has to be said.

Staff changes, price rises, equipment acquisitions, birthdays, anniversaries

interstate travels of managers - they all come up in the Friday meeting. It is a one way message but they have been doing it for sixty five years and the staff expect it.

Every Tuesday a simple one page newsletter does the rounds which expands or adds to the information from the previous Friday and asks for feedback on key issues.

One of the greatest motivators of people is feedback on results; their own as well as the organisation's.

The same place that had the manager who never got back to us, also had a staff barbecue once or twice a year where the manager got sloshed and made an incoherent speech about turnover and market share.

Likewise if the place's costs were too high there was a memo about private phone calls. Apart from that the policy seemed to be one intended to keep the workers ignorant to keep down gossip.

It doesn't work. It creates more gossip.



Bright Idea:

Plan a regular meeting where you give feedback on results, and plans.

Say what *can* be done on your mobile

You'd think that if people buy a mobile to stay in touch they'd actually expect to get calls wouldn't you. So when the phone rings and the caller asks if they can give a quote on a fencing job you'd expect them to say they'd be glad to help. Wouldn't you?

Well so would I, but it seems as though we are wrong. Experience tells me that the reason many business people get a mobile phone is so they can place bets on the TAB easier and that's all.

They haven't worked it out that when customers call they want help; their world is out of order; their lives are in a mess and the phone owner has the answer to life's little crisis.

Instead of saying:

I couldn't see you today.

I hope you don't want it done before Christmas.

And you want it done yesterday like everyone else I bet.

You'd be lucky to get anyone before the end of January.

Say

*I can see you Friday in the morning
How about we meet in the first few days after Christmas?*

I'm taking a break for a few weeks but I'll give you the number of a bloke who shares the Christmas load with me.



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Say what can be done, not what can't be done.

How to handle angry callers

Moving right along with the T.H.A.N.K.S. rule

After you T- Thank them for calling, ask them to H- Hold for a few seconds while you look into something important, and A- Ask them for the details, you need to

N- Nurse it along.

This means you listen long and hard.

Don't interrupt.

Don't try to justify yourself.

Don't try to explain the solution

Listen using another mnemonic: **O.A.R.S.**

Observe the tone and speed and try to listen through the tirade to the real need.

Attend to their tirade with primary level listening cues like,

Uh Huh... Mmm... I see... Yes... I understand

Respond to their problem with phrases like,

I know how you feel.

A lot of people would feel that way. If I were in your shoes I'd feel like that too.

I see your point.

I hear you loud and clear.

Summarise their complaint by saying things like,

Here's what I'm going to do about it...

Let me make a couple of suggestions and you tell me how you feel about them...

Let's try this approach to the problem...



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Angry people mostly need an ear.

Lend them yours.