

WEEK TWO: ACT IN THE MOMENT FEBRUARY 7, 2011 SERVICE PRINCIPLES NEWSLETTER

This week our focus is on the Service Principle “Act In The Moment”

Unanticipated Service: The service that surprises and delights your customer.



<p>6. I Respond Positively When Speaking with Others</p> <p>I respond positively and show I care by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Concentrating on the customer -Attentively listening while making eye contact -Responding with sincerity and, when appropriate saying “I’m happy to take care of that for you” -Using the customer’s name if I know it -Ensuring complete satisfaction 	<p>7. I L.E.A.R.N. to wow the Customer</p> <p>I show I care when presented with a customer issue by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Owning the problem -I use the L.E.A.R.N. process of listening, empathizing, apologizing, reacting and notifying to resolve, wow and build trust 	<p>8. I know our Library System</p> <p>I can answer customers’ questions because I know about the Library’s:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Facilities -Materials -Services -Procedures and processes -Monthly events, activities, training classes and/or meetings 	<p>9. I Anticipate Needs</p> <p>I anticipate our customers’ needs by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Watching for cues -Listening thoroughly -Acting before being asked 	<p>10. I Act on Knowledge</p> <p>I ensure the success of the system each day by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Knowing our regular customers by name -Proactively accommodating our customers’ needs -Keeping myself up to date and knowledgeable about sources of information
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DISCUSSION STARTERS:

Some establishments seem to ooze customer service. Their procedures make it easy for the customer to do business with them, their amenities demonstrate that they want to make each guest comfortable and they anticipate their customers' needs even before the guest knows they need it. What amenities does the library offer that helps us anticipate our customers’ needs?

Something to think about...

How to Anticipate Customer Needs

Anticipating a customer's needs is an important part of most retail businesses, especially in a more challenging retail environment- and it provides opportunities for personal growth, as well. A business that takes the extra step of anticipating and providing for an obvious corollary need can generate loyal, repeat customers; and even a lowly clerk who is alert to the needs of the customer standing in front of them is sure to advance. While much of this may involve remembering the desires of the individual customer, it also largely means putting yourself in a customer's place, which takes a little practice. The needs of a truck driver versus a pregnant mother with children may differ, even for the purchase of a cup of coffee.

Below are some steps to help you improve your anticipation of a customer's needs.

Steps

Do your best to put yourself into that individual customer's place in the transaction. Their needs might be unusual, recurring, or even non-existent beyond a basic purchase. Much of the 'anticipation' of a customer's needs comes down to being aware when there might even be any- to picking up the facial cues/body language they are giving you. Ignore these at your business' peril; a simple "anything else?", asked correctly, makes all the difference.

See that unusual needs are normally spoken by the customer. This makes unusual needs one of the easiest to deal with; while you may get a vague, questioning look for recurring needs, that is less likely, but still possible here. If an unusual need becomes recurring, and your establishment is able to accommodate this customer, expect them to be your best advertisement.

Note that recognizing and meeting recurring needs of regular customers are a business' bread and butter.

Your patron can, most likely, go one block over and get the same product; you remembering that they like lemon rind with their coffee, for instance, and having it for them with a smile, is what keeps them

Recognize that quite a few customers will have no additional needs beyond a basic purchase. Their body language and facial expression will tell you this; however, they still appreciate the extra second you take, possibly with just eye contact, to affirm this. Hovering waiters, take note; sometimes the best service is no service.

Understand that everyone needs a smile. This speaks to your openness as a service person- your 'approachability'.

The phrase "the customer is always right" is a rephrasing of this. Customers naturally seek out places where they won't be belittled, even for unusual requests. A successful business should expect a certain amount of 'idle' trade due solely to their practice of affirmation- people are going to come spend money at your business, or on a certain

Tips

People don't usually expect you to read their minds, although this can be helpful for more recurring requests.

This really amounts to having enough presence of mind to recognize an unstated 'request', usually by way of Body language.

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

Only those who have learned the power of sincere and selfless contribution experience life's deepest joy: true fulfillment.

— Anthony Robbins

Sincerity of feeling, intent and presentation touches the hearts of everyone. But what exactly defines sincerity?

And how do you achieve it? No other formula exists for sincerity than to be sincere by being genuine, having faith and trust in yourself, and just being rather than trying to project something that you are not.

OWNING A PROBLEM IS THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS RESOLUTION

Studies by [J.D. Power and Associates](#) and others suggest that customer loyalty may *increase* when problems experienced by customers are resolved to their satisfaction (or, better yet, their delight). Even so, problems often go unresolved or ignored by employees who are in a position to make things right and win over customers in the process.

Earlier this week in New York City, I had experiences that illustrate both extremes:

The first involved a cab ride in midtown Manhattan Tuesday morning. When I entered the taxicab at the intersection of 57th St. and Park Avenue, I said to the driver, “ I ’ m headed down to Twenty-eighth and Park. ”

He nodded and instantly we were heading south on Park Avenue towards 28th St. Initially, the driver made no impression whatsoever and I became lost in the sights and sounds of the city outside my taxicab.

It took a moment for me to realize that he had pulled over at 48th St. and totaled the fare at \$4.70. Noticing this, I leaned forward and repeated, “ *Twenty*-eighth Street, not *Forty*-eighth Street. ”

The driver, accepting responsibility for the misunderstanding, smiled and said, “ Ah— *Twenty*-eighth Street. I am so sorry.”

As we continued south on Park Avenue, I noticed that the fare reading on the meter remained unchanged. Sure enough, as he pulled to the curb at 28th St., the total fare had not changed from \$4.70. He had accepted responsibility for the misunderstanding and absorbed the final twenty blocks worth of fare.

As a result, I paid ten dollars for the ride and thanked him for his understanding.

Contrast this with an experience I had later that day at a midtown diner:

My server, Mackenzie, was a delight. She was effervescent, interested, and engaged. She made eye-contact, smiled, and added enthusiasm to her voice. She was exceptional.

After I had ordered a cheeseburger, a Coke, and a side of onion rings for lunch, Mackenzie said, “ What would you like on your cheeseburger? ”

I said, “ Just lettuce. Hold the pickles and onions. ” Then I added, “ I know it’ s weird. I’ m ordering a side of onion rings but having you hold the onions on my cheeseburger. I just like them fried. ”

She smiled and said, “ Oh, I know just what you ’ re talking about. I ’ m the same way!”

We had made a personal connection. The ice was broken. I was no longer just another restaurant cover. And she was no longer just another server. She delivered my Coke to the table, smiled wide, and was off to the kitchen to submit my lunch order.

Ten minutes later, the diner ’ s manager arrived at my table with my cheeseburger and a basket of tater tots. At the same time, Mackenzie arrived tableside to verify that I was all set.

As the manager placed the tater tots on the table I said, “ Oh wait—I didn ’ t order tater tots. I ordered onion rings. ”

Mackenzie looked at her manager, then at me (this time, not smiling) and said, “ You ordered tater tots. ”

At first I thought she was joking—especially given the conversation we ’ d had about onions. When it was clear that she wasn ’ t kidding, I said, “ Don ’ t you remember our conversation? (silence) I had you hold the onions on my cheeseburger but ordered a side of onion rings? ”

Stone faced, and without responding, she followed her manager back to the kitchen. When she returned to the restaurant floor, she avoided my table. A few minutes later, the manager placed a basket of onion rings on my table and left without saying a word.

Now, I ’ m not sure what the dynamics were. Maybe Mackenzie ’ s manager is particularly intolerant of mistakes? Maybe there was some other reason that caused her to claim ignorance in order to save face? Either way, I felt uneasy about it. (Of the many feelings you ’ d like your customers to experience, uneasiness isn ’ t one of them.)

I ate my lunch (which was excellent), paid my bill, and left.

On a ten-point scale, I would rate my experience with the cab driver a ten and, if given the chance, would go out of my way to ride with him again. I would refer him to others and would even be willing to pay a small premium to ride with this particular driver—largely due to the trust and confidence I now have in him.

On the other hand, I would rate my experience at the diner a six and would not go out of my way to return to this diner or recommend it to others. My review has been tainted by the “ tater tot incident ” and, specifically, Mackenzie ’ s refusal to accept responsibility for her mistake.