

#89: Ideas & Inspirations

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Words of Wisdom

"There are no traffic jams along the extra mile."

- ROGER STAUBACH

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:

- Your customer offering
- Are you taking your customers for granted
- Price wars



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



The Value of Customer Satisfaction Surveys

It's no secret that the power in a customer-business relationship lies with the customer.

These are the people who decide which products or services they want to buy, who they want to buy it from and the customer service they experience from a company often plays a starring role in those decisions. Therefore, it is more than worthwhile to take the time to find out what customers have to say about the standard of customer service you're providing.

One of the best ways to listen to the voice of the customer is by implementing customer satisfaction surveys. Doing so can provide the feedback about an organisation's customer service that you otherwise might be missing. For instance, a customer satisfaction survey can let you glimpse how customers view a company's offerings, provide customer insight about competitors, and allow you to see what they think about customer service operations.

Customer satisfaction surveys allow companies to view the unfiltered impressions, whether positive or not-so-positive, about the service the customer experiences. Such in-depth data provides the important information that is integral to improving products and services. Survey results also give companies the opportunity to gain a better understanding of their customers themselves and their changing needs and perceptions.

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Dealing with complaints in your business

It costs much less to keep an existing customer than to win a new customer, so retaining existing customers is more profitable for business.

GOOD SERVICE BUILDS CUSTOMER LOYALTY

If a company has an effective customer complaints systems in place, many of those customers with questions or problems can be retained. Satisfied complainants can be nearly as, or even more loyal than, customers who did not have a problem.

MEDIocre SERVICE DRIVES CUSTOMERS AWAY

Even if things do not go badly, research suggests that some customers will still leave because they are not totally satisfied with the service.

POOR SERVICE DRIVES CUSTOMERS AWAY

And they will not always come back and give you the chance to put it right. Often you will be the last person to hear about your customer's problem. Many New Zealanders will not bother to complain to the business concerned. They will talk to their friends and 'talk' with their feet by taking their custom elsewhere. Even if they do complain to you, you could still lose a number of these customers after only their first complaint.

Negative word of mouth is spread and believed at twice the rate of positive word of mouth. And social media such as Facebook and Twitter allow people to share consumer experiences - both positive and negative - straight away.

Things customers say they value highly include:

- having a problem fixed first time, on time
- having confidence that you know what you are doing
- not being blamed for the problem
- showing concern for their situation
- being kept informed of progress
- being advised what they can do to help avoid the problem recurring.

HANDLING COMPLAINTS

Examples of poor complaint handling which we have seen include:

- not having any way for customers to make their complaints to you
- not having a system to record complaints
- failing to acknowledge there is a problem
- not taking responsibility for the problem, and giving the customer the run-around by making them deal with other staff
- blaming the customer for the problem, or saying no-one else has complained
- lack of knowledge of the problem
- lack of knowledge of consumer law
- taking too long to respond

- having staff with no authority to make decisions to help the customer
- offering no solution or offering a solution which is unlikely to resolve the problem
- promising to contact the customer and not doing so.

Customers are looking for their problem to be easy to report, acknowledged and dealt with quickly, sensitively, and fairly.

Here are some ideas to help achieve the above principles and to help you develop good complaints handling systems.



Customers are looking for their problem to be easy to report, acknowledged and dealt with quickly, sensitively, and fairly.

REPORTING THE PROBLEM

Ensure that your contact details are readily available to customers - eg in the phonebook or prominently on your webpage.

When the problem is reported

- Thank the customer for bringing the problem to your attention.
- Treat the customer with empathy, courtesy, patience, honesty and fairness.
- Speak to the customer in person, and do not rely solely on written complaints, or records of conversations.
- Show the customer that you clearly understand their problem by listening and taking notes.
- Ask questions to clarify the situation.
- Do not jump to conclusions, apportion blame, or become defensive.
- Summarise back to the customer your understanding of the problem.
- Respond to the problem quickly, tell the customer how it will be handled and tell them when they can expect a response.

SOLVING THE PROBLEM

- Tell the customer you are taking responsibility for dealing with the problem.
- Familiarise yourself with any background information. This could include checking internal records, speaking to staff and checking how this compares with the customer's version of events.
- Be solution-focused by involving the customer in this process.
- Make sure the customer is happy with the proposed solution before going ahead.
- Ensure that the solution meets any legal obligations. If the customer is asking for more than their legal right and you feel they

are making an unrealistic demand, explain what the law says. You could refer them to Consumer Affairs or the Citizens Advice Bureau to check on their legal rights.

- Where there are no legal obligations, offer a solution that in the circumstances best meets the needs of your business. For example, if the law says a customer is entitled to a repair, you may be willing to offer a replacement if that is what the customer wants. The cost of satisfying the customer is likely to be less than the cost of losing them.

- Make sure you do what you promised to do, and don't delay - quick action will keep customers happy, but stalling and delays will lose customers. If there is going to be a delay, tell the customer.
- Tell the customer what your business will do to prevent the problem from happening again in the future.

FOLLOWING UP AFTER THE PROBLEM

- Keep a record of the complaint, and what you have agreed with the customer.
- Invite the customer to inform you promptly if they are not satisfied.
- Keep a record of all problems and complaints raised.
- Use these records to help you evaluate your complaints handling systems. They can help you identify recurring problems with particular goods you sell or services you offer.
- Check how well and how quickly your staff are handling complaints. Use the information to decide:
 - Do I have an adequate way of handling each type of complaint?
 - Do staff know what our policy is for handling the different types of complaint?
 - What training do staff need?

Having good systems in place ensures complaints are dealt with correctly, within a reasonable time, and that the customer is kept informed. This is essential to ensuring the customer has confidence in your business.



article sourced from:
CONSUMER AFFAIRS
MANATŪ KAIHOKOHOKO
www.consumeraffairs.govt.nz

Real, Functional & Personal

Despite all the customer service trends and fads over the years, in our experience there's one lesson that's rung most true: At the end of the day, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. To create a culture where customer service guides business decisions, actually caring about customer service has to be the point of entry.

In order to truly succeed it must be supported from the top of the house, encouraged and rewarded through hiring decisions, training programmes and incentive structures throughout the organisation, and embraced by individuals in the organisation on a personal level. Real, functional and personal - that's the brilliance of creating a customer service culture that flows from the top down and right back up.

As with any strategic priority in business, if customer service isn't championed from the top, it's going nowhere. The CEO must be the chief customer service officer, and every business decision must run through a

filter where the customer experience is top of mind. In short, it has to be at the core of corporate strategy, making it clear to your customers and employees how you compete, whether it's through longer business hours, new platforms to maximise convenience, service innovation, or all of the above.

At the same time, you must create a work environment where all employees are encouraged to engage, and feel empowered to contribute. Ultimately, this means asking them to challenge you if you're going in a direction that is not right for your customers. There should be checks and balances at all levels of the organisation. If the leadership team proves to make a bad call - and we all know that happens - then course-correct.

There's no shame in reversing a decision when the end goal is clear to everyone in the organisation. It actually validates your strategy. Nothing is more sacred when you consider that your employee brand is, in fact, your customer brand.



The end goal is ensuring your staff really care about customer service

It's also critical that customer service become the litmus test for employee hiring, professional development, and rewards and incentives. Compensation should be tied to both the individual and the overall organisation's service performance. Measure your service level by directly asking your customers what they think. It's an investment of time and resources but there's no truer test.

Should You Be Investing In Your Front-Line Supervisors?



Invest in supervisors to transform a mediocre team into a great team.

If you're at all like me, you've lost count of the times you've read that you should be investing in your employees. Invest in your employees and they'll stick around forever and become valued brand advocates. But which employees? With turnover rates growing day-by-day, here is some advice: Invest in your front-line supervisors.

PEOPLE LEAVE MANAGEMENT – NOT COMPANIES

There are many reasons a company may have high turnover: poor working conditions, low

pay, bad hours, and mandatory over-time to name a few. But, statistics show the number one reason an employee leaves a job is bad management. A bad supervisor can quickly compromise an otherwise well-performing team. The ripple effect of bad management reaches all aspects of business and will quickly affect not only employee morale but also customer loyalty.

Front-line supervisors with a strong customer service focus in addition to excellent communication and coaching skills will transform a mediocre performing team into a good team and a good team into the envy of your competitors.

REDUCE TURNOVER WITH GREAT MANAGEMENT

Good front-line supervision is integral to lowering employee turnover. With the high costs of recruiting, hiring, and training new staff continually increasing, why not invest in existing employees and improve overall company operations? Some managers and supervisors naturally possess exemplary communication skills. Others need training and exposure to the positive effects of a learn-by doing-method of managing and motivating employees.

GREAT MANAGEMENT INSPIRES CUSTOMER LOYALTY

Customer loyalty comes from providing them with exemplary service. The service culture of your business needs to be consistent, all the way to the top: if managers aren't customer-focused, then front-line staff members won't be inspired to be either.

The next time you review your training schedule, be sure to include time for your front-line supervisors. Improving their skills with training will reduce employee turnover and increase customer satisfaction.

MANAGING SERVICE IN YOUR BUSINESS workshop:

- Learn how to develop a customer service philosophy and culture within the organisation.
- Learn techniques to identify and implement workable customer service standards.

PHONE 0800 801 233 to talk to your local KiwiHost representative about Managing Service In Your Business.

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

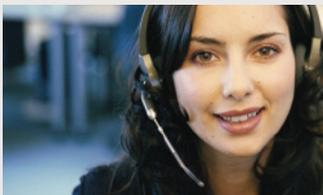
Regardless of your business or the make-up of your staff, everyday your business is presented with opportunities to generate new customers and to retain and grow existing ones – well trained, professional staff will recognise those opportunities.

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:

- > Understand 'how and why' their role is important.
- > Turn all customer service scenarios into gold.
- > Use the strategies to turn problem, angry and difficult customers into happy ones.
- > 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.
- > Use questioning techniques and effective listening.

Duration: 1 Day



DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS

Conflict is a very normal part of healthy relationships. Success comes from understanding how we behave, as well as how we can influence others. If difficult interactions are necessary, and we approach them with a plan, we will find that we have less difficult people to deal with. By learning skills to manage conflict, you can approach disagreements with confidence that keeps your personal and professional relationships strong.

Participants in this workshop will learn how to turn difficult situations into opportunities for growth, and come away with techniques to enable them to deal competently with a challenging situation in such a way that the organisation's reputation and customer service relationship are seen in a positive way.

This workshop will enable the participant to:

- > Recognise how attitudes and actions affect others.
- > Find new and effective techniques for dealing with difficult customers.
- > Learn techniques and strategies for managing and dealing with anger.
- > Develop coping strategies for dealing with difficult customers and turning difficult situations into win/win situations.

Duration: 1 Day

National Training Schedule

KEY SERVICE SKILLS

Duration: 1 Day

	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Auckland		16		5
Waikato			27	
Bay of Plenty	17			
Palmerston North				
Napier & Hastings	5	25		6
Wellington		30		18
Christchurch	11		6	
Dunedin		30		

ADVANCED CUSTOMER SERVICE

Duration: 1 Day

	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Auckland	25	30		6
Waikato		18		12
Bay of Plenty	18			
Palmerston North			29	
Napier & Hastings			15	
Wellington		16		11
Nelson			15	
Christchurch	4	16		4
Dunedin			7	

PROFESSIONAL TELEPHONE SKILLS

Duration: 1 Day

	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Auckland		17		4
Waikato		19		13
Palmerston North			27	
Wellington		9		4
Blenheim				
Christchurch		17		11
Dunedin		25		

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS

Duration: 1 Day

	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Auckland	12		27	
Waikato	18			
Wellington		2		
Christchurch	5		28	

To request this workshop in your area contact your local KiwiHost representative.



KIWIHOST

NEW ZEALAND'S CUSTOMER SERVICE EXPERTS

PHONE 0800 801 233

WWW.KIWIHOST.CO.NZ

Don't forget about our New Programmes!

ADVANCED SERVICE SKILLS FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

A workshop specifically for Healthcare Professionals. Learn what your patient's service expectations are and how to meet them effectively.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS

Our NEW & IMPROVED Dealing with Difficult Customers workshop gives participants skills to manage conflict, so that they can approach disagreements with confidence that keeps personal and professional relationships strong.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Is time management an illusion? An effective ideal? 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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Since 2007 Kiwihost has conducted a yearly national customer service satisfaction survey, with the exception of 2010 due to the Canterbury earthquakes. The intention of the annual Service Survey is to collect a running record of New Zealander's perceptions of the standard of customer service they experience across a broad range of industries and the way they respond to both good and bad service experiences.

Through the years the survey has evolved to reflect the changes in the way that New Zealander's are interacting with businesses and the new ways that we're experiencing service. This year in particular the survey asks about the ever burgeoning social media aspect of companies' customer service interactions, to gauge what the public thought of these efforts.

“ We live in an age where customers are more than willing to share their experiences with friends, family and the social media world. So it's not surprising that they may be just as willing to share their experiences with the company itself – as long as they are asked. ”

GENI MCCALLUM
– KIWIHOST SOCIAL MEDIA CO-ORDINATOR

The results of the survey are published in a report called the *Customer Service Pulse* and will be available for download from the KiwiHost website. We look forward to sharing the results of the 2012 New Zealand Service Survey soon.

what's your opinion of customer service in New Zealand...

good, bad or ugly?

IT'S TIME TO FIND OUT

*“ we'd like to say a big **thank you** to everyone who took part in the **2012 NZ Service Survey**. The results will be out soon, keep an eye on www.kiwihost.co.nz for more information. ”*



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To sign up visit
www.kiwihost.co.nz
Winners will be announced in the next print edition of Ideas & Inspirations.

Congratulations to last issue's winner
Dean Brindle from Turners Auctions.

