

Better Results in Tough Times

By David B. Burns

Hard economic times force everyone to do more with less. Both businesses and consumers are more cautious than ever about where and how they spend their money. To thrive in tough economic times, you need to set your business apart from the competition. Improving communication, both internally with employees and externally with customers, is a free (or at least very inexpensive) way to do that.

Employees with clear expectations are happier, do better work, are more loyal, and, most important, treat your customers better. Customers that are treated well feel appreciated, are happier, buy more often, are more loyal, and tell everyone they know how wonderful it is to do business with your company. This powerful, no-cost, word-of-mouth marketing is critically important when every dollar counts.

You may not be able to change your product, and you probably don't have lots of extra money for advertising. However, it costs you little or nothing to improve your employees' communication skills. These improved skills will WOW your customers, making it easy and pleasant for them to do business with you, bringing them back for more.

One simple and effective way to improve customer impressions and set your company apart is through subtle changes in the wording of everyday communications. Think how irritated you have become when, as a customer, you are "transferred". You are already behind schedule, you just navigated the company's push-seven-for-customer-service-phone-system maze, and now you get transferred to someone else to whom you have to explain your entire story all over again.

To minimize your customer's irritation, stop transferring them. Instead of allowing your customer service reps to say, "Let me transfer you to that department," train them to say, "Let me connect you to the best person to take care of that for you." While "transferring" conveys a sense of dumping the customer off on just anybody, "connecting" them to the "best person" conveys a sense of giving them access to the expert. As a customer, wouldn't you rather talk to an expert instead of just anybody?

Just like small deposits that compound in a bank account, business success is made up of many little actions that accrue to big payoffs. Take a mental trip through the daily customer interactions of your company. Where can you make seemingly small and simple word choices to improve your service and set your company apart?

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David travels the country working as a business trainer, speaker, and consultant to organizations ranging in size from micro-businesses to Fortune 500 firms. He brings diverse training and knowledge to every presentation, including a degree in Education, advanced degrees in multiple martial arts, and the practical hands-on experience of running his own businesses since 1980. With his trademark optimism and sense of humor, he shares his experience in terms everyone can relate to, put into practice, and benefit from immediately.

To have David customize a seminar, workshop, or keynote for your organization, contact him by phone at 570-765-1909, or by e-mail at dburns@ptdprolog.net.