

Do You Know The "A Bit More" Principles Of Exceptional Customer Service? Part 2 of 3:Dan Ohler_50l-2517s:

In Part 1, we discussed exceptional customer service, plus "A Bit More."

We defined a customer as anyone with whom we have a relationship (paying customer, family, neighbour).

We met Master Electrician, Brent, who provides exceptional customer service, plus "A Bit More." He treats his customers with dignity, asks questions, listens, explains what he will do, and then does what he said he would.

Since reading that article, how are you doing with the "A Bit More" dignity hints?

Let's look at the "A Bit More" principles of asking and listening.

Asking questions is the only way we can truly find out what our customer wants. We are indicating that we care about our customer, and have a desire to help.

Why don't we ask more questions?

Possibly because we assume we already know. To assume we know? Uncle Jack says, "Break that word into its parts. To assume makes an ass out of u and me."

There is far more to asking than simply saying the words. Research shows that a small percentage of communication occurs through the words. The largest part of communication occurs through tone-of-voice and body-language.

In his book, "Wherever You Go, There You Are," Dr. Kabat-Zinn explains how intern doctors are trained to complete their doctor-patient interviews by asking, "Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?" In most cases, when the question is being asked, these interns are shaking their heads side-to-side, giving the body-language message, "No. You don't have anything else to say. And if you do, I don't want to hear it."

Asking can be uncomfortable. Why?

If we ask, we are opening the door to who-knows-what. Our customer may dish out information, requests, feelings, and perceptions that we may not want, or know how to handle. It can be intimidating and scary.

When in that uncomfortable and vulnerable position of feeling intimidated or scared, we become defensive and angry, or reclusive and small. Does effective communication happen then? Not likely.

Asking is only one piece of the communication link. We need to give our customer psychological "air-time" and let them speak, without interruption or judgment. We need to listen.

Listen is defined as: to make an effort to hear. I take that further to mean: to make a conscious effort to understand, not simply the words, but their intended meaning and the attached feelings. Communication guru, Stephen Covey, says, "The one who listens does the most work, not the one who speaks."

Here are some listening techniques that are often used. And dang-it, I find myself using these more often than I care to admit.

- Ignoring – the words enter right ear, roll around in fluff and cyberspace, exit left ear, without understanding or care.
- Pretend listening – I am preoccupied with something else (computer, book, etc), and respond, "Yup," "Uh huh," "OK." Did I listen? See ignoring above.
- Selective autobiographical listening – I pay attention, and hear a few words, but only the ones that I want to hear – the ones with which I agree. Then I take over the conversation and twist it around according to my own story, without any regard for my customer's concerns.
- Shotgun listening – I hear the first two or three words, and then turn off the rest because he/she is wrong. I am loading my gun to fire back as soon as that "son-of-a-gun" shuts up. Or, I interrupt and let 'er fly.

Do you use these techniques now and then?

Here are "A Bit More" ask and listen hints:

- Ask questions and clarifying questions. Use the phrase, "Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?" to ensure that your customer has aired all concerns.
- Be aware of your tone of voice and body language. Are they congruent with your desire to understand your customer? The intent is to invite an effective dialogue.
- Listen empathically, with your ears, eyes, and heart until you understand exactly what your customer means (words and feelings). Set aside your agenda, ego, and feelings because these will taint the understanding process. Listen to understand, not necessarily to agree (as in sympathy).
- Focus your attention only on your customer. Sit upright or stand erect, in an open position (arms and legs uncrossed). Lean forward slightly, with wide-open, inviting eyes. Do not allow your mind to wander or your eyes to be distracted.
- Watch and listen carefully for the body language and tone of voice. Ask more questions if you don't understand completely.

When I consciously use these techniques, my communication becomes far more effective. I don't get angry or defensive. I don't have arguments or fights. I don't feel like running away.

I am focused, appreciative, and helpful. I am productive, successful, and happy. I find that my customers are appreciative, supportive, and faithful.

Go figure! It's that natural law again, "what you give; you get."

In business terms, it is an excellent return on investment.

Think about this honestly. Do you like to fight, argue, and contest your paying customers, spouse, partner, children, friends, and neighbours?

Do you want to improve these customer relations, without any cash outlay?

I challenge you to consciously apply these "A Bit More" ask and listen hints. I guarantee that your relationships will improve. Use the "A Bit More" dignity hints and you will experience even greater enhancement.

What do you have to gain?

Win/win success and happiness for all.

Keep practicing, and don't mosey too far from the arena, 'cause there are more "A Bit More" principlesme.

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