



SMALL BUSINESS SOLUTIONS, LLC



### LET'S IMPROVE OUR SERVICE!

We're all worried about what the economy holds for us. We're all worried about the double whammy of reduced sales and higher prices.

What can we do to minimize the negative impacts of what could happen?

The best news is that none of us in small business ever need to re-invent a wheel. The best ideas we already know, and we have already done. The only thing needed is to review those good ideas.

I keep files on these good ideas, and periodically review them, looking for inspiration and insights.

So this article comes from several files, including a user survey sent by one of my professional organizations and some of my own thoughts from 2007.

The best inspirations come from Nancy Friedman, The Telephone Doctor. Any one of these inspirations, done consistently, will improve your customer service.

Smile! Right. Don't kid yourself. Just as it can be seen in person, it can be heard on the phone. So as NIKE says Just Do It!

Use "WE" statements when possible rather than YOU. "We" is consultative and feels friendlier. And it's far less confrontational.

See someone walking into your store/branch/location/office? Say "HELLO" loud and clear. Ignoring people, even fellow employees, isn't good customer service.

Keep the fences in your organization low. We all know there needs to be rules, guidelines and policies. However, when there are so many of them, they can make doing business difficult. It's not worth it.

Be a double checker. Often, we can miss something or not know all the details. Most people appreciate hearing, "The last time I checked, we were out of stock on that; however, let me DOUBLE CHECK for you." That particular statement is so comforting. Everyone loves a double checker.

We cannot do 2 things well once. If you're working with a customer, on the phone or in person,

Thank you notes are still thought of as GREAT. Take the time to jot several off a day to new or better yet; older clients.

Respond rapidly. When you receive information from a client, it's a good thing to let them know you did receive it. That's good communications.

Extend a firm handshake when being introduced to a customer. And FIRM is the key word. That loose, fish like handshake is not a sign of confidence. FIRM is key.

Use your name when you answer the phone. Everyone likes to know to whom they're talking.

Contrast these thoughts with the tongue-in-cheek suggestions listed in a survey I recently received. The survey question was "What is your favorite form of physical exercise?"

The answers included:

- Jogging/running
- Jumping to conclusions
- Passing the buck
- Racquet sports
- Looking for someone to blame

We can all identify the right and the wrong answers in that list, but think about it: how many times do you choose the wrong answer in real life?

My own files provide 3 inspirations. Remember, these are all things we know to do, and we try very hard to do them. But they still need more emphasis.

Here is my first inspiration: When we set up a new client for Monthly Financial Reporting, rapid, accurate response is important to us. But I have forgotten to make the following promise to the client: "If I don't have you up and running within 45 days, there's something wrong with one of us. It won't be me."

The second inspiration is to make the CAP potential our #1 criterion. CAP means clients who are Cooperative, Appreciative, and Pay On Time. Think about it—in small business, is there ever a reason to collect customers that do not have the potential to be CAP customers?

The final inspiration: Don't Try to Be Too Many Things to Too Many People. In other words, don't spread yourself too thin.

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