

Julie Gaver

Professional Speaking & Corporate Training, LLC

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Theme: Customer Service



I recently experienced my first cruise with my friend Liz. People either love cruises or hate them. I happen to be a lover! Surround me with an eclectic assortment of people from all walks of life and an infinite supply of food for five days and color me *happy!*

At any rate, cruising offers the consumer an intensive lesson in the art of truly serving the customer. In this issue we'll examine three basic service principles I experienced during my trip. I challenge you to think how these principles apply to your organization and the clients you serve.

Make the customer feel special.

Upon arrival we were greeted warmly by our state room attendant who acted as if we were long lost friends. As she helped us get settled, we mentioned that the cruise was our way of celebrating pivotal birthdays. Her reaction to that news was Academy Award worthy! Her adamant refusal to believe that we were the ages we claimed to be endeared her to us immediately. As one would expect, her tip increased exponentially as she continued to express disbelief each and every time she saw us. I know a "suck-up" when I see one, but when it becomes an art form, you can't help but reward it!

Your clients *assume* that you know what you're doing. If they thought for a minute that you didn't know how to install an HVAC system, perform that surgical procedure, or conduct an audit, they wouldn't have called you in the first place. Clients need to feel special, valued, and important. The more you know about them, the more you can appeal to what is important in their lives. *Question to Ponder: What do you do to create that special feeling for your clients?*

Expect resistance.

"Don't mind criticism. If it is untrue, disregard it.

If unfair, keep from irritation.

If it is ignorant, smile.

If it is justified, it is not criticism – learn from it."

(from *The Starbucks Experience: Turning Ordinary into Extraordinary*)

Standing in line to purchase photos one evening, I witnessed this philosophy in action. A woman was holding what had to be several hundred dollars worth of photos. She neglected to bring her Sea Pass Card for the financial transaction. (*The Sea*

Pass Card is a delayed payment method which temporarily entices you to develop spending habits like Paris Hilton, while remaining numb to the realization that you have a limited income and actually work for a living. But I digress....)

She had no cash, no credit card, no Sea Pass card, nothing to even prove her identity. Yet, she verbally abused the attendant for not letting her walk with pictures in tow. He offered several valid solutions to her dilemma, to no avail. She was rude and dismissive and made the attack very personal. I watched the attendant closely during this unfortunate incident and never once did his face register anger or even annoyance. He was firm, professional, and polite. He even smiled (see Starbucks quote). I was ready for a smack-down just watching the drama unfold and yet he handled himself with great class and dignity.

Question to ponder: How do you handle resistance and what does it say about your organization?

Humor is the tie that binds.

Countless books have been written about the value of humor in the workplace. It increases morale and makes dealing with your organization a pleasant experience for your customer. *Question to Ponder: How do your employees have fun @ work, and how does the customer benefit?*

Each evening when we returned to our stateroom, we were met with a surprise which always made us laugh! Look who greeted us one late night when we returned to our room!



The cruise director shared some of the most frequently asked questions posed to the Royal Caribbean staff over the years. Some of my favorites included: 1) Is the water in the toilets fresh or salt water? 2) What time is the midnight buffet? 3) Does the crew sleep on the ship too? 4) Does the elevator go to the front of the ship? 5) If our names are not on the pictures you post in the photo gallery, how will we know they are ours? 6) Does the water go the entire way around this island? 7) What do you do with the ice sculptures after they melt? 8) Have you seen my husband?????? ☺

Enjoy your summer!

Julie

Julie@juliegaver.com