

## Magic Words to Customers

Let's face it, some words have magical powers. Just as "Open Sesame" magically opens the door to a new world, so too can other words and phrases have similar effects on your customers and clients. This month we look at the power of words to create trust, allegiance and commitment in our customers and clients.

### Opening the Doors to Success

Sometimes it's the pleasant words we hear as doors are opening, that make a difference to customers. For Nancy Graham of Berkeley Heights, New Jersey, who comes to San Francisco four times a year, it's the words "Welcome Back to Campton Place Mrs. Graham, we've missed you!" that make her feel special. Then the hotel doorman inquires about her family as he opens the door to another wonderful stay at this celebrated Union Square hotel in San Francisco.

Whether customers are greeted at the door, clients are welcomed over the phone or upon arrival at functions, those initial words are music to our ears. Research tells us we like the sound of our own names. Are you greeting your new and returning customers with favor and delight? If not, why not? It's neither hard nor expensive.

### Missing in Inaction

Recently I dined at one of San Francisco's finest French restaurants. My companion and I had been looking forward to this night for weeks. Our night arrived, as did we, dressed in our finest attire. We drove up, I gave the valet my car keys and we entered the restaurant. And then...nothing. Nobody to greet us. Nobody to seat us. We were left alone at the front door. Diners at many tables glanced our way, and returned to the comfort of their meals and mates. As guests, we were made to feel awkward, out of place and inconsequential. Finally, a passing waiter, with plates akimbo, smiled and promised that someone would be right there to greet us.

Establishments know that they must manage the entire experience of their patrons, from the initial phone call to the follow-up after an interaction or event. Sometimes a few well-chosen words of ours can assuage customers' feelings, inducing comfort and care on the part of their clientele. Develop key phrases to help your customers feel comfortable about their relationship with you.

### Bad Form...Customer or Teller?

I was at a bank recently when a teller abruptly pointed out "you forgot to fill out your deposit slip correctly." I suddenly felt as though I was back in grade school. Her words stung me like a bee. Her remark felt so judgmental. If only she'd said "let me help you complete this" or even "don't forget to fill in today's date." She was so busy judging me she forgot to partner with me for a successful transaction. In most service situations our customers are looking for help, assistance and perhaps some guidance. It wouldn't have been hard for this teller to achieve the same result, a properly filled in transaction slip, without alienating her customer.

Mouthing a few choice words isn't enough. They must be genuinely delivered. To utter phrases without heartfelt thoughts behind them rings hollow with others. Sincerity matters. So try to let your body language, eye contact and gestures reinforce the sentiment you are expressing. In part, that helps these comforting words become magical. Even on the telephone or via e-mail, you can convey care, concern and sincerity.

Consider these phrases which bring comfort, smiles and satisfaction to your customers' ears:

#### **"We can fix it."**

This tells your customers that you are solution oriented and partnering with them for success. We creates a partnership.

#### **"We're sorry for your inconvenience."**

These magic words show awareness and concern for your customers.

#### **"Consider it done!"**

Tells customers you are there for them, protecting their interests and serving their needs. It suggests a fait accompli. Since it's ultimately results that matter it foreshadows a solution.

#### **"We're delighted to serve you."**

Shows your organization values their patronage. It's an expression of appreciation.

**"Thank you for choosing us. It's our pleasure to serve you."**

Shows you are indebted to your customers.

**"Please let us know what else we can do to make your experience a pleasurable one."**

This phrase shows your availability and accountability to your clients. By being receptive you show a confidence in serving others and managing your client relationships effectively.

**"Welcome back. We've missed serving you."**

We cherish long term relationships and relish your repeat business.

These aren't words like Abracadabra, or the phrase Robert Redford used in the movie The Hot Rock, when his utterance of "Afghanistan Banana-Stand" put bank personnel into a trance. What gives your words magical powers are the thoughts and care behind them. These words engender trust. These phrases build allegiance and strengthen commitment. When you're prepared to walk your talk your customers will magically reappear again and again. Treasure your customer exchanges and you and your customers can share the reward of repeat business.

### About the Author

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