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Money Making Matters

By Sherryl Dever

With a smidgen of forethought and at no cost, simple good manners can dramatically improve your bottom line. Good manners keep customers happier and make terrific lasting impressions. Positive impressions help clients and customers affirm they made the right choice. Positive interactions generate tons of good feelings that can translate into a powerful, positive buzz. And a good buzz is advertising you just can't buy. Word of mouth marketing is strongest, because it's testimonials from your ideal customers to your targeted prospects—without you having to pay for it. How great is that?

Fast facts for better business results

Involve your whole company. Identify ideal/well-mannered business interactions with yourself, employees and coworkers as a way of feeling better about the job you do. Find out what customers and clients want through a professionally prepared survey. Uplift yourself and everyone around you by taking charge of your company's good manners. Choose a few little things that make the most "cents" to your business.

Think of customers as honored client-guests. Every client deserves the "royal treatment." After all, wouldn't you rather patronize a business whose employees treat you like a VIP and honored guest rather than an interruption in their day?

Make first impressions count. It's been said you never have a second chance to make a good first impression. But in business, every impression is a first impression. The most recent impression is the only one that counts for clients. It's your greatest opportunity to affirm to them that they made the right choice. Give it your all, every time.

Stay on point. Keep communication(s) and ongoing interactions on target. Once you've spent all that time and money bringing a client to your door, remember that you aren't finished. All the fun has actually just begun. Remember why they chose you.

Keep your promises. Be known as a person of your word. Your word is your bond.

Never explain, complain, blame or fib. Clients don't care about excuses, they just want what they came for, and it's within you to deliver it.

Listen with learning in mind. Almost every client need can be met, or difficult situation avoided, by simply asking good questions in the first place. Take time to clarify client needs before you "go to work for them." This is your chance to shine.

Keep vocabulary plain. Don't use fancy words just because you think it might make a better impression. Less is more. Avoid technical lingo. Avoid clichés. Stay away from industry jargon.

Keep email a formal communication. Keep email simple, warm and to the point. Don't ever say anything in an email you wouldn't say in person. Sign off with a trademark salutation and include your full contact information every time.

Treat phone calls as marketing opportunities. Clients know when they've interrupted you. Make sure when you answer, you're ready to take care of them well—or simply don't answer and let the call go to voicemail. Always return every phone call promptly.

[Etiquette]

View letters, reports and memos as formal communications and powerful marketing tools. Written communications with clients can make or break your credibility. Make sure you and your employees are well-versed in the correct use of form letters, grammar, spelling and punctuation. Be good proofreaders.

Mind your cell phone manners. Never answer your cell phone in a meeting or in front of a client. It signifies they're less important than your caller—and it's a big turn-off. No one wants to hear your personal business. Never talk on your cell phone in front of an audience.

Follow a strict no-gossip rule. Gossip is anything spoken about someone else when they're not in the room. No kidding. Keep your lips zipped. Your very reputation is on the line at that moment. Don't put yourself in a compromising position.

Avoid cross talk between employees in front of clients at all cost. It makes clients feel less important and uncomfortable. If you absolutely need to interrupt a client interaction, excuse yourself and step out of earshot.

Send thank-you notes early and often. Drop your clients a line using preprinted company logo note cards. This simple step can be immensely valuable in building credibility and cementing next steps for action. Find excuses to say thank you!

See every employee as a good will ambassador. Stockroom or mailroom, bookkeeper to boardroom, retailer or restaurateur, always hire for temperament. Train everyone well. Make sure everyone passes the test for being a great greeter.

Be a role model for good manners. Make it simple for everyone in your organization to follow your example.

Choose one or two ways you can demonstrate your "signature good manners" every day. Take the time to define the nature of your business, or it will be defined by others. The "manner" in which business is conducted is the signature of your business' brand. Keep clients happy and coming back. Make manners count.

Good manners never go out of style and really can make a huge difference between you and your competition. Be sure to measure your successes through the use of good manners. You, your employees and your clients can tell the difference by the way they feel about you and your business. Keep up the good work generating good feelings and good buzz by paying attention to the little things. Good will may be hard to measure, but spontaneous referrals to deserving businesses can certainly be counted.

Since 1986, Sherryl Dever, founder and CEO of The Business Resource, has led her team in improving profits and personal satisfaction within founder-led businesses in California. For a free 101 Ways to Market Your Business tool kit, you can contact her at sherryldever@thebusinessresource.com.



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Are you a local business person with biz wisdom to share with our readers? Then consider writing a piece for Biz Tips. Send your 500- to 1,100-word piece to jfadda@northbaybiz.com.