

Follow-up

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH PEOPLE SINCE 1987

Spring Forward

Customer service gurus say that 30 people will tell others how dreadful their contact with us was, while only 3 will comment on how good we are. When we hear, "We'll get back to you," most of us cynically assume it to be similar to "Don't call us, we'll call you" (meaning bye!).

It doesn't have to be this way, but too frequently this is how both large and small businesses operate. More importantly, as individuals we often do this with friends and colleagues. Why is this?

Whether business or individual, we all need customers. We need others around us who get the clear message that we value them. If they have our number and can contact us, we have a chance of making progress towards a "sale." If we do not follow up, why would they believe we think them or their business concerns important?



"We'll get back to you . . ."

For the past seven years, I have been in business for myself. My work takes me to a wide variety of clients for whom I present workshops and, more often, work with them as coach to enhance their understanding of themselves and those they work with. As my business has grown, different ways to "market" it, and therefore myself, have arisen.

Many colleagues tell me we are in hard times — quite honestly, for some of them, I am not surprised. When I thought about creating a newsletter, it took me nearly a year to find a desk-top publisher to help me produce it. Most of my time was spent phoning individuals who indicated that desk-top publishing was their bag and then hearing diddly squat from them. When finally, someone wonderful (namely Janice) appeared and the first edition was produced, within two weeks of publication, I received three quotations. Sorry folks, too late.

What is it that encourages a customer or colleague to call us? If we don't get back to them appropriately, they will get back at us . . . so what makes the difference? A track record of reliability is one of the foundations of that difference. Do a reality check, are you reliable or reliably unreliable? Do you impress others by your follow up? Do you "delight" them?

Put the shoe on the other foot — isn't it nice to be treated as if we do matter

when we go to buy a service or product or simply talk with someone else?

What happens is that we often get stuck on what Ron Zemke calls the "Great Fly Wheel of Habit," taking the "We've always done it this way" route. It is so important to see ourselves as others (our customers) see us. Get out and talk to your customers. Ask them how they think you are doing.

Where does your track record come from?

- You show you care.
- You get results.
- You follow through.
- You have integrity.

How do you achieve this?

- You know what business you're in.
- You know what business you're not in.
- Your image/body language/appearance supports you.
- You model the behaviour you expect from customers and, most importantly, with the people who work with you and for you.

It's all about COMMUNICATING and that means we need to listen. Sure you do that, you say—but do you *really* listen? We live in a talking world, busy with interruptions. Learn to listen well and hear what people are saying to you. Remember, you

Last time, I wrote about the work I had done with Dr. Edward de Bono and, in particular, the Six Thinking Hats® program. Since then, I have had the opportunity to work with some of you in this program. One of the things that continues to be rammed home to me is how important it is for us to be willing to look at the world around us in new and optimistic ways—for us not to always wear our “Black Hats” of caution and drawbacks but to replace them with the “Yellow” and “Green” Hats of benefits, opportunities and new ideas.

The cover article, “We’ll get back to you,” talks of the contentment and complacency we so easily fall into in regards to not only our customers in the normal sense of the word but also our friends and colleagues. Last August, the article, “What You Put In You Get Out With Interest,” explained Stephen Covey’s concept of “Emotional Bank Accounts.” You may recall that we need to build our accounts with each other so we have some room to make withdrawals without getting overdrawn. We build those accounts by communicating well, listening, keeping confidences and in many other ways to taking care of relationships.

Sometimes we don’t know until we try what risks we are prepared to take. With this edition of *Follow-up*, you’ll find a brochure about a unique mountain expedition business. Katie, our daughter, and her husband Kirk offer a variety of mountain experiences in the Rockies for all levels of participant. Do give them a call. You may be astonished to find me on one of those adventures! But please, after you . . .

Jane

SPRING FORWARD

Continued from front cover

have two ears and two eyes, but only one mouth.

It doesn’t really matter how we think we are doing; it’s all to do with the customers’ perception. One of my clients is changing his organization from one which received funding to one which needs to find its clients and sell its services and products (like most of us). In our meetings, we have spent a lot of time discussing the differences between what they do well and what a customer might be looking for. These can be at opposite ends of the spectrum. But what matters is what the customer perceives as value.

Sometimes, things go wrong. As the saying goes, “If you’re going to bow, bow low.” If you need to apologize, then apologize. Did you know we can win back a customer by the effective way we deal with their disappointment with us? Be positively different to deal with. Adopt the maxim, “*underpromise, overdeliver*” as your golden rule.

“We’ll get back to you” can make all the difference to your success. Every-

one who is in contact with you is a potential customer.

Think of ways you can delight customers in the way you get back to them. Many times we do not know where we will meet a potential customer or a new friend. Remember, in

So take a look at you and your business from the outside in.

- Phone in. Would you be impressed?
- If you have a reception area, sit in it yourself. Would you feel welcome?
- Complain. How hassle-free is it?
- Look at what you mail out. Does it look as if you know what you’re doing and care?
- Watch your behaviour. Would you be impressed if you were a customer?
- Ask, “What could we do better?” “What is the silliest thing we do and why do we do it?”

this case, silence is not golden—it’s red for danger. Green is for go: communicate, follow up, be alive and growing. Make a commitment to ensure that when you say, “We’ll get back to you,” you do.

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Watch & Talk About

Dr. Jennifer James is a cultural anthropologist living in Washington State who has an energetic and entertaining presentation style. She has appeared recently on public television and has now released two excellent videos. *Windows of Change* offers a definition and understanding of change and offers some tools to accept and manage it. Jennifer gives some ideas on how to be flexible, improve our willingness to eat different vegetables and create strategies for accepting the new and different. In *Survival Skills for the Future*, Jennifer teaches the concepts of Perspective, Energy and Safety to think one step ahead. This video offers more personal strategies than *Windows of Change*, which is more appropriate for a business focus. Produced by Enterprise Media. In Canada, available for preview, rent or purchase from International Tele-Films, 1-800-561-4300.