



Remember My Name

Margaret W. Purvine



Ms. Purvine is a Principal with Next Step Solutions, Inc. Her business career spans 25 years and includes experience in management, sales, IT and several aspects of customer support. She can be reached directly by phone at 425.918.1910 or by email at: margaret@nextstepsolutions.com

A client of ours, someone who has traveled and entertained extensively, told the following story. It is a story with a message worth remembering, especially by any of us attempting to provide a service or a product for a fee.

The client was entertaining a group of business associates at an elegant restaurant in another city. He anticipated a productive evening and an excellent dinner. Even more importantly, at least to this oenophile, was a fine wine to complement that dinner. Although perfectly capable of selecting an excellent pairing himself, he requested the assistance of the restaurant's sommelier. A good sommelier may know of something new, untried, and incredible. A wine connoisseur is always searching and learning.

This sommelier may have been very knowledgeable, but he was a sommelier with attitude. He was arrogant and off hand in his service to this client. Put out, our client decided he had had enough. He beckoned to the sommelier, and then waited as he came forward. He gestured again, encouraging the sommelier to bend over so he could speak softly. The sommelier bent over.

"I think you've forgotten my name," the client said. The sommelier was somewhat taken aback. Part of his job was to remember the bigwigs. He had one of those "Oh my God" moments. Who was this guy? Mr Big? A serious VIP? Was the sommelier in serious trouble for missing the presence of a celebrity? Arrogance beginning to crumble, he bent and listened again.

"My name is Customer."

Message received. How often have we all experienced that irritation caused by arrogant service people? It seems so pointless and stupid, at least to all of us customers. After all, we are paying

them for service, right? You would think they'd get a clue. All we ask is that they smile when they take our money. Seems the least they could do.

And yet, how many of us forget this simple lesson when we are on the other side of the transaction? I remember attending a class in the basics of telemarketing. They call it "smiling and dialing". To be successful, one must have the right attitude. Smile before you dial.

I believe this applies to answering the phone as well. Yes, we all get busy and that ringing phone is one more interruption in the work flow. But, what if the person calling is named "Customer"? Or is the voice on the other end of the call Ms. Potential Client? How about doing some "smiling and answering"? Might be a good idea.

At the very beginning of his working life (we won't say just how many years ago), my partner Dennis worked for Sears Roebuck. He held a number of different positions there, including sales, department management, even customer service management. In those days, Sears employees actually received their pay in cash. Hard to believe in this day of computer generated checks and direct electronic deposits, but they received an envelope every week filled with cold, hard currency, both bills and coins. Customers paid for their purchases in cash, too. There is a hard reality to cash transactions that we have lost in these days of checks and credit cards. Sears provided goods. Customers picked out what they wanted and paid for those goods in official legal tender. Those hard-earned bills and coins went into the cash register. At the end of each business day, the money from the register was transferred to a bag, which went to the cashier in the cashier's cage for counting, then into the store's safe. On pay day, that same cash found its way into the pay envelopes of the employees who helped Sears customers make their selections and smiled when they accepted their cash payments. Is there a message here? Yes. It was absolutely clear to Sears employees that their wages came from their customers.

Just in case any of the Sears employees missed that obvious message, however, there was an even more direct message delivered with each pay envelope. Written, in script, on the outside of that pay envelope was the following important reminder:

"Satisfied customers make our jobs more secure."

Helloooo. Remember my name? My name is Customer.

Copyright © 2003 by Next Step Solutions, Inc. All rights reserved.

TEL

425
918.1910

FAX

425
918.1912

WEB

www.
nextstepsolutions.com

NEXT STEP SOLUTIONS, INC.

9792 Edmonds Way, #424
Edmonds, WA 98020