

## Superior Customer Service Is Always Desirable

**Today's marketplace operates at breakneck speeds. In almost every segment, a customer can have a change of heart and a new priority overnight. Keeping pace with technology, innovation, competition and fulfilling customers desires can leave a business owner breathless.**

However, one thing that will never change is a customer's desire for excellent product and excellent service. Achieving and managing excellence throughout your entire organization will give you a leg up in the race for customers.

This can be challenging when your relationships with vendors, distributors, employees and suppliers can change as so quickly. Small businesses typically have limited resources and

can often get swept out of the marketplace because of rapid changes in technology and customer tastes. A commitment to excellence is the great equalizer between small and big companies.

**...smaller companies are often better at achieving excellence...**

In fact, smaller companies are often better at achieving excellence because there is less bureaucracy, better teamwork and more personal contact with customers throughout the organization's hierarchy.

Consider your business for a moment. Do you have an explicit

commitment to quality and customer satisfaction? Is it written down and expressed to your entire organization? Do you have clear processes and systems for handling customer complaints?

Similarly, is there a way for customers to give you feedback? Do you encourage customer suggestion? Does your entire team share an enthusiastic and genuine commitment to delivering an excellent product and superior customer service? Does your team consider it *the* number one priority?

It's very likely your team probably has scores of ideas on how to improve customer service in these areas. Encouraging their ideas into is a great way to motivate them and often produces low-cost enhancements to your business.

## The Five Minute Stress Buster

### **Stop. Breathe. Reflect.**

So, now you've interfered with the automatic stress response, you should be able to focus on the real problem without the distractions of exaggerated worries. Reflect on the causes of your worry and consider these questions:

What is the emotional 'hook' that sets my stress reaction going? Am I exaggerating the threat?

Why do I leap to the most awful conclusions? What is the specific problem in this case?

Understanding the source of stress takes more than a quick moment of thought, but if you've been working on the issue, you'll be able to apply your understanding to the particular stressful moment. The next step is to choose how to deal with the situation.

Consider each available option,

and then choose the one that best fulfills your goals. Ask yourself:

What is my real goal here? What is the best solution to the problem? Do I have the skills and tools to achieve the best solution? What can I do right now? Later today? Tomorrow?

Once you've made your decision, then you can act on it with clarity.

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## Controlling Expenses To Control Cash Flow

**Expenses and sales have an intimate relationship. Knowing how your costs move will help you control your cash flow and project your future.**

**Fixed costs** remain relatively constant in the short term. Gradually as sales increase to higher levels, your fixed costs will grow.

As your business grows you may

have to acquire more space.

This is true of vehicle ownership, insurance, employee benefits and telephone line charges.

Some control methods include:

Renting temporary space on a short lease.

Leasing rather than buying additional vehicles.

Outsourcing office work.

When sales increase, **variable expenses** per unit remain the same, but total costs rise with sales. Some control strategies:

Efficient manufacturing to reduce material or labour costs.

Proper scheduling to reduce expensive rush delivery charges.

Maintain your profits by promptly passing cost increases and decreases to your buyers.

## Don't Forget, You Need To Ask For The Order

**Many business people simply make it difficult for people to buy things because they don't give them a specific action plan.**

Consider for example, a potential customer of a business is reading a letter about a new product or service. The potential customer is excited.

But the she puts the letter down

promising to "get back to it" but never actually does. Sound familiar?

People need to be told explicitly how to act in order to obtain a business product or service. Sure, it seems obvious. But it's amazing how many times the obvious gets overlooked.

The fact is, potential customers (strange as it might seem) really

do appreciate being led.

Let's get even stronger. If you don't get PRO-active in asking for the order, you are denying yourself maybe two-thirds of your potential business.

The opportunities to get proactive and lead your customers to buy from you are far-reaching and plentiful. Grasp them!

**The wise man will create more opportunities than he finds.**

**- Francis Bacon**

## How To Boost Traffic To Your Website

**Building awareness of your Internet presence and providing incentives for customers to visit leads to increased traffic and ultimately online success.**

The first and most basic way to build traffic is to **mention your Web site in all marketing efforts**, from radio spots and banner ads to brochures and business cards. Print ads should refer customers to your site for more

information just as your online content promotes your brick-and-mortar presence.

Businesses looking to reach customers across the country — or around the world — should **register with the leading search engines.**

Your home page must contain HTML text pertaining to your business — as opposed to solely

graphical elements — in order for most search engines to recognize and rank your site.

If your business is primarily local, **advertise on local portals.** Conduct Web searches to find the popular local sites that people frequent for information such as movie times and job listings. Online ad rates are highly negotiable.



## Developing Your Branding

**Branding is not just about having a strong name, logo and slogan. It's how consistently, and deliberately they are applied—and how well they are supported.**

**Consistency. Every piece of communication should have a consistent look and feel.**

For example, don't put the logo on your stationery in one color, while your marketing materials have it in another.

Be consistent in how you apply all elements of your brand marketing strategy.

**A Deliberately Implemented Plan.** It's important to think through your entire plan and how all you will use all elements

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of your brand strategy—direct mail, website, stationery. Most

importantly, put in place the needed resources, both human and financial, to assure the strategy's proper execution.

**Top Management Support.** Your leaders and management team must believe in and support your strategy.

You will be fighting an uphill battle without it. A branding strategy requires financial resources and a long-term commitment to reach its full potential.

For more information about successful branding strategies, contact your Principa Alliance member.

***The thing always happens that you really believe in; and the belief in a thing makes it happen.***

***- Frank Loyd Wright***

## Building A Productive Team Through Communication

**Communication is the key to keeping a team productive and functioning smoothly. You can get the most out of your team if you:**

**Review the format for team discussion during meetings**

Follow the same format for all meetings so everyone know what to expect. Focus on problem solving instead of sharing information. Don't waste valuable time on information that could be distributed ahead of

time. Keep the discussion on track.

**Encourage all members to contribute**

Ask each person what they think of a proposal so that everyone stays involved.

By structuring time for everyone to participate, the team will benefit from each member's opinion.

**Deliberately examine opposite points of view**

Ask for all possibilities, and examine them.

Ensure everyone has the opportunity to offer input.

**Encourage the team to talk often about its goals**

Revisit the initial purpose of the team periodically. When a project is under way, it's easy to get lost in the details.

Talking about goals will help ensure you're all working to accomplish the same thing.

***Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.***

***- Helen Keller***



## Like Everyone Else, Customers Want The Truth

***If you want any relationship to work, you have to get this right. Honest, two-way communication is the foundation for trust, respect, integrity and loyalty. And it doesn't always come easy. It often requires courage.***

Consider your own experience as a customer. Remember a time when you felt cheated or misled. The business may not have even been *intentionally* cheating you or jerking you around. But the point is you felt that way. And you may have customers who have felt the same way about your business.

Think back to your bad experience. Would you have felt differently if the company had clearly stated prices, order tracking or

delivery schedules that were available to you as a customer?

Would it have made a difference if someone had recognised the problem they caused you, accepted responsibility and offered an alternative?

Would you have more faith in the business if a representative of that business just plain told you the truth instead of trying to

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cover their tracks or avoid having to resolve the problem? Chances are you're saying yes right now.

If you want to create a lasting relationship with your customers, it would be wise to make sure you offer them the truth and an open ear. No one wants to feel ignored or dismissed, especially if they are already upset.

One of the best ways to let your customers know you are listening is to implement their ideas. Who better to know how you can better serve them than your customers? When they let you know what you can do to make them happier, truly listen and assess their ideas.

When it comes to building business profits...

# Knowledge is POWER.

'Power up' your business today with the Business DashBoard™.

Ask us how.



***Nothing can stop a man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude.***

***- Thomas Jefferson***

## About our consulting services

***We're not your average advisory firm. Far from it.***

Our membership in the Principa Alliance means you have access to the collective knowledge and expertise of an international network made up of hundreds of professionals who specialize in consulting to small and medium-sized businesses, just like yours.

When you add to that our experience, support and guidance, you can be confident you'll have all the help you need to make your business truly extraordinary.

***We can and will do so much more for you than just 'keep the score'.***

Our goal is to help you build a stronger, more profitable business, so you can enjoy greater financial freedom and a higher quality of life as a result.

Contact us today to discuss how we can help you build a business that delivers on its promise—to you, your team, and your customers.



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