

Magic Words

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Magic Words

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What Words are Music to the Ears of Your 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 affects 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 nice 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.

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 people like the sound of their own names. Are you greeting your new and returning customers with favor and delight?

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 garb. 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 can assuage customers' feelings, induce comfort and care on the part of their clientele.

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 were back in grade school. Her words stung me like a bee. Her remark seemed 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 meant. 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.

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'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.

"We're delighted to serve you."

Shows your organization values their patronage.

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