

For Permanent & Positive Change

The Exchange

FEATURED TOPIC: STIMULUS PACKAGE FOR SERVICE

Stimulus Package for Service

In today's economic climate, cost is not the only deciding factor for purchases. Businesses do not just do business with another business; rather people in that business make purchases from people who provide excellent service. Service is the people connector and something that you can affect.

How can you create your own stimulus package for service? Take the word "service" and make the word an acronym to make you stand apart from the crowd. TLC offers the following suggestions:

S stands for speed and simplicity. In this age of instant gratification, giving service quickly and making purchasing from your company easy can make the difference. Several years ago, one of TLC's significant customers told us they loved our products and service, yet our billing process was complicated and took too much time for them to approve the invoices. TLC immediately simplified the billing process to allow this customer and others to spend less time in the approval process. TLC used to tell prospects that we needed three weeks from the time of decision to allow us to create the program for them. Some needs are more urgent, so TLC changed our process in order to meet those needs. In Vincent's article in this issue, he mentioned our creation of Season Tickets, a program that brings affordable training to multiple companies at the same time. Customers mentioned that they wanted to be able to make individual purchases online, so TLC created simple order forms on our electronic store at www.talklisten.com. What can you do to make your service faster and easier? Look at your service from the customer's perspective. Be willing to change.

E stands for examination. Take the time to examine the needs of your customers. When you understand the "why" of their purchasing, it is easy to find the what and how. This knowledge comes when you listen more than you talk. Listen to what they are both saying and not saying. The days of going into the sales call with presentations are past. This is especially true when you have been communicating with your contact and now you have an opportunity to meet with the decision maker. Never assume you know enough to understand why this decision maker will decide to hire your company or not. Ask and listen

carefully to the answers. Examination requires unrelenting focus.

R stands for repetition. Providing good service the first time helps you to be able to provide future service. Stay in contact with the customer throughout the service and delivery. Regular connectivity will alert you to new needs as they arise. Selling to a satisfied customer is much easier than finding a new one. It does require consistent work though. Keep "upping" your game. Treat old customers as though they were your bread and butter because they are. TLC has found that five consistent customers are better than one big one. The difference is continuing to meet their needs and asking for repeat business.

V stands for value. Your customers need to see the value in the service you provide. Never assume they perceive the value. Ask them. Surveying your current customers helps you to continue to improve. If you are close to your customers, sometimes it is helpful to involve a third party to determine areas that can be improved. Your customer who likes you may be more willing to discuss mild dissatisfactions with this third party than saying something that might affect their relationship with you. Be sure to follow up on the information you receive. It doesn't do any good to ask if you are not willing to change. It actually can harm because the customer may likely expect improvement since they took their time to share concerns.

I stands for incentives. In tough economic times, it can help to give customers a reason to purchase now from you. Discounts are not the only way to give incentives, although if providing more service or products to the same customer is a cost savings for your company, that savings can

continued on page 3

What Our Clients Are Saying

"You sure are good at what you do!"

Alvia Brown, Atlanta

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Beefing Up Your Sales with Better Service	2
Remembering Jayne Stephens	2
Happy Birthday!	2
Featured Service	3
CEO Corner	4

Looking Forward

Our next issue will focus on Stimulating Relationships.

Looking Back

You might also be interested in our [Stimulate Sales](#) or read [previous issues of The Exchange](#).

"Being on par in terms of price and quality only gets you into the game. Service wins the game."

Tony Alessandra

"There is only one boss. The customer. And he can fire everybody in the company from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money somewhere else."

Sam Walton

For Permanent & Positive Change

Beefing up Your Sales with Better Service

Vincent Ivan Phipps, A.C.E.

Did you know there are over 150,000 different places in the world to buy a hamburger? Wow! Talk about "beefing" up!

Our economy may be in economic flux, yet each of these burger places still has a line everyday outside of their locations! How would you like to have a line of cars and people lined up outside your door waiting to buy your service or product?

The economy is only partially to blame for our current financial situations. The major part of the problem is we. More importantly, what are we doing about it?

Burger joints now call themselves establishments. When was the last time you changed your product or service name? Burger joints constantly offer discounts, specials, and introductory deals. When was the last time you offered a promotional rate on a new product or service?

Burger joints provide fast, reliable, consistent service. When was the last time you went to order a burger and were told, "I am sorry, we are all out of hamburgers"?

So how do you beef up your sales? Improve your service. Now I know what you are thinking, "I am already doing everything I can to provide quality service!" Really? When was the last time you called a former customer and asked them, "What would our company need to do to really impress you?" Avoid sending them an email, handing them an evaluation form, telling them to subscribe to a newsletter, or asking them to register at your website. I mean pick up the phone and talk to them. Better yet, visit with them and listen!

Another thing you can do to beef up your sales through service is to remain current with pop culture trends and needs. For example, twenty years ago (1989), even if you had a website, people would not go to it or even know what to do when they got there. Now, in 2009, you could lose professional credibility if you tell someone you don't have an email or a website.

A final suggestion is to adjust your prices along with your service. I know the economy is tight! I am not suggesting you lower your prices or give away your services. Truth be told, some companies are already doing that now! When I say adjust, I mean offer what you have in new ways.

For example, at TLC, about ten years ago we conducted multi day training for private companies. This spanned for a two-month period meeting weekly

for 8-hour days. This was a great investment for organizations that had the resources. Our other clients asked if we could create a program for all public companies that anyone could attend. We developed our Season Ticket Seminars. These are one-day seminars, conducted for only 4 hours at less than \$100. We address specific topics and strive to keep the sessions to manageable numbers to ensure there is sufficient time for discussion and practice.

We still offer our premier services in communication training. We have also expanded to meet other current needs such as: interviewing, increasing sales, and handling stress!

To maximize your sales, look for ways to be the solutions. If you can do this consistently, rest assured your sales will beef up! ❖

Remembering Jayne Stephens

We received sad news that Jayne Stephens died of a heart attack on Wednesday, May 6, 2009 in her home in Orlando. Jayne was former Assistant Director at TLC from 1984-1995, working with our clients in Chattanooga and Atlanta. Jayne is survived by her husband, Garry, and daughters Tara and Emma.

Happy Birthday

TLC wishes a Happy Birthday to clients celebrating in May:

- » Ray Repic
- » Tammy Caldwell
- » Mashid Mahdavi
- » Ann Dozier
- » Le Nguyen
- » Lamario Stripling
- » Jim Blasingame
- » Jimmy Wardlaw
- » Mike Hickey
- » Philip D. Meade
- » Lesley Dale
- » Lee Fiata
- » Joe Burchfield
- » Mike McNearney
- » Vicki Palmer
- » David Ridge

Quick Tips

- ✓ Personally ask your customers what would improve your services.
- ✓ Remain nimble in your services and delivery to address current needs.
- ✓ Follow up after a sale or service to find additional areas in which you can provide assistance.

"The single most important thing to remember about any enterprise is that there are no results inside its walls. The result of a business is a satisfied customer."

Peter Drucker

"Biggest question: Isn't it really 'customer helping' rather than customer service? And wouldn't you deliver better service if you thought of it that way?"

Jeffrey Gitomer

"There's a place in the world for any business that takes care of its customers - after the sale."

Harvey MacKay

"Treat every customer as if they sign your paycheck... because they do."

Author Unknown

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Featured Service: Establishing Relationships with Customers!

Therese Padgett

Develop the art of creating, maintaining and repairing relationships with customers in TLC's one-day course, Establishing Relationships with Customers.

Everyone talks about customer service. Service is what a company gives. Sales are what a company gets. When a company takes the time to build a relationship, it is a win-win. Both the customer and the company give and get! We all know that it takes more effort to develop new customers so it is important to keep the ones you already have. This course takes a giant leap forward to taking your customers to the next level. Your customers will more than merely remain loyal; they will send you their friends.

You will learn how to:

- » Start the conversations.
- » Listen for meaning.
- » Track the progress.
- » Demonstrate that you get it.
- » Invest in the relationship.
- » Get the referrals.

Establishing Relationships with Customers is a one-day seminar that is very beneficial for anyone who comes in direct contact with your customers. It is a course that TLC brings in-house and customizes to meet the needs of your company's customer contact personnel, be they sales people, contract negotiators or your customer service teams.

Call TLC today at 1-888-BECAUSE (888-232-2873) to discuss your particular needs for this course. We will be happy to listen and then customize the training to meet your needs. ❖

Stimulus Package for Service *continued from page 1*

certainly be passed along. Create a list of priority customers even if all of your customers are on the list. With each purchase, give a benefit. One incentive that TLC uses is to offer to provide the service now and spread the payments into several months or quarters for those companies who have monthly or quarterly budget limitations.

C stands for creating a niche. Spend some time identifying your target market and spend 80% of your time there. Look at where you have been the most successful and profitable. Compare yourself with your competition. What sets you apart? A niche in a small market can be more beneficial than trying to be everything to everyone. TLC has a client who works with improving sales in small individually owned optometrist's offices. While she could expand to helping chiropractors as well, she has built a reputation on her targeted market. What niche can you create for you and your company?

E stands for the extra you are willing to go. When push comes to shove, doing the small extra things can make a big difference. TLC has created some add-on services that cost us in time development, yet the cost of delivery of those services is minimal. One is our "tips" that we email to customers each week to keep their goals focused. That little extra, along with others such as this newsletter, provides more after-the-sale service to our clients. What extra can you give?

Service: Speed & simplicity; Examination, Repetition, Value; Incentives, Creating a niche, and Extra add-ons can make the difference for you and your company. Create your own stimulus package for service. TLC would love to hear about what works for you. We'll pass it along with your permission. ❖

"A sale is not something you pursue, it is something that happens to you while you are immersed in serving your customer."

Unknown

"Be everywhere, do everything, and never fail to astonish the customer."

Macy's Motto

"Although your customers won't love you if you give bad service, your competitors will."

Kate Zabriskie

"Every great business is built on friendship."

JC Penney

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CEO Corner

Beverly J. Inman-Ebel

“Japanese Customer Service”

Many of my clients know that I recently returned from three weeks in Japan. During that time I had the opportunity to visit many retailers and discuss with business owners the impact of the global economy and how they are dealing with it.

I found the Japanese business people to be very accommodating. I ordered some cutlery online while in Japan, and while the company did not take credit cards, a common practice in Japan I discovered, I was requested to give the date and time that I wanted to receive the COD order. Instead of giving me a range of times, such as Monday or Thursday 8:00 a.m. - noon or 1:00 – 5:00 p.m., the instructions were for the customer to give the exact date and time of the desired delivery. I typed in “Friday, 10:00 a.m.” thinking I would probably spend the entire day waiting and hoping the knives would arrive. A text message came at 9:50 a.m. that Friday and the knives were delivered to my door exactly at 10:00 a.m. Now that is customer service – making the customer feel like his/her time is important.

Have we become so automated that our customer service is a thing of the past? I am accustomed to calling for service and waiting for the recorded message to magically name the type of service I am seeking so that I may push the right number on my phone to obtain it. Sadly, on the rare occasion that I am given an option that describes the reason I am calling, I am met with disappointment as I hear another round of options. Usually I just start punching numbers hoping to get a human being although that is not always a solution since so many representatives fail to be able to speak my language clearly.

I called to make a reservation last week and the representative could not find me in their computer database although I travel with this company about

every six weeks. She was unable to correctly type the spelling of my name. Okay. Inman-Ebel may be tough to pronounce, but I was saying, “I as in ice, N as in Nancy, M as in Mary...” I finally told her I would call back another time. I waited three days and my heart sank when I realized I had the same representative. I calmly went through my spelling again and she repeated back, “N-M-A-N, right? It is not in our computer.” Two explanations later, I finally got my reservation. You may wonder why I didn’t go to their competitor. They are the only reasonably priced shuttle to Atlanta and more reliable than our airport to that city.

Most of us have competition and lose customers every week because someone else is giving better service or a better value. We can do something about this. Listen to your customer service representatives and coach them to excel in service. If you don’t have the time to do it, hire us. Please forgive the pun, but this beloved country of ours needs a little TLC in our customer service.

To be competitive, you still have to have a quality product that is reasonably priced in order for the customer to find value. Yet, a few more phone calls like the one I mentioned above, and I will drive myself to Atlanta. Quality service will not only get you customers, it will keep them for you.

Ask your customers when they want delivery. The knives were great, but it is the story of the service that I have been talking about since I got back. Be sure that your customers are talking about your service. Serve. Prosper. Live your dreams! ❖

“Forget about the sales you hope to make and concentrate on the service you want to render.”

Harry Bullis

“Good leaders must first become good servants.”

Robert Greenleaf

“I won’t complain. I just won’t come back.”

Brown & Williamson
Tobacco Ad

TLC establishes long-term relationships with our clients. If we have helped you or if you believe our approach to change would work for someone you know, please communicate with us by e-mail tlc@talklisten.com or phone 1-888-232-2873. We work with individuals and groups on the following subject areas: attitude, listening, body language, voice, leadership, compliments and corrections, behavioral style, teamwork, effective meetings, public speaking, accent reduction and much more!

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