



Focus B.C.

We'll Get Back To You

by Jane Durant

The gurus of customer service tell us 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 bye...

It doesn't have to be this way, but far too frequently this is the way that businesses large and small operate. Why is this?

As a business of any size, we need customers. If they have our number and can contact us, we have already some chance of making progress towards a "sale". If we do not follow up, then why would they believe we think their business to be important?

For the past six years, I have been in business for myself. My work takes me to a wide variety of clients for whom I present workshops, give speeches and work with them as coach in the area of enhancing their understanding of themselves and the people they work with. As my business has grown, ways to "market" it through the printed medium have also arisen.

Many colleagues tell me we are in hard times — quite honestly, for some of them, I am not surprised. To find a desktop publisher to help me produce my newsletter *Follow-up* took me nearly a year. Most of the time, I spent phoning individuals who indicated that desktop publishing was their bag and then hearing diddly squat from them. When finally, someone wonderful appeared and the first edition was produced. Within two weeks of publication, I received three quotes. Sorry folks, too late.



Jane Durant helps companies focus on delivering first-rate customer service.

What is it that encourages a customer to call us? If we don't get back to them appropriately, they will get back at us...So what makes the difference?

Track records are the basis of that difference. Do a reality check, are you reliable or reliably unreliable? Do you impress customers by your follow up? More importantly 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, prod-

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.

uct 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" and the old "We've always done it this way" approach. Instead, get to know your customers and clients. Ask them what their needs are. Ask them how well you are meeting these needs and what you could improve on.

It's all about being willing to listen. Sure you do that, you reply, 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 have two ears, two eyes and one mouth.

Next, it doesn't really matter how we think we are doing, it's all to do with the customer's perception. A client of mine is having to adjust her company from being one which received government funding to one which doesn't.

In our meetings, we have spent a lot of time discussing the differences between what she does well and what a customer might be looking for. These two areas can be at opposite ends of the spectrum. What matters is what the customer perceives as value.

Keep notes on your customers, remember who they are, what they are like. Inevitably, things foul up sometimes — so be prepared to apologize. And, as the saying goes, "If you're going to bow, bow low".

We can often win back a customer by effectively handling their disappointment with our earlier service by improving on it immediately. Try to be positively different to deal with.

Adopt the maxim "Under promise, over deliver" as your golden rule of customer service.

*Jane Durant specializes in customized workshops, speeches and consulting to encourage organizations to hire the right people and keep them. Author of the recently published **Don't You have Anything Better to Do?**, she is homebased in Vancouver.*



How to take a look at your business from the outside in

- Phone in...Would you be impressed by the greeting?
- Sit in your reception area...Would you feel welcome?
- Complain...How hassle-free is it?
- Look at what you mail out...Does it look like you know what you're doing and care about it?
- Watch your behaviour...Would you be impressed if you were a customer?
- What could you do better? What is the silliest thing you do and how could you improve on it?