

WORDS Matter

At the start of every summer my mind turns to the beach, and on what books I plan to read while I'm there. The books I like best are the ones that speak to me....that relate to my situation....that draw me into their story. Books are collections of words, and that is what I'd like to talk about this week....words....the words that we use with each other, and with our customers...

Words are important. They communicate. They relate. They attract. They sell. They turn us on. They turn us off. They connect us to others.

But...how often do you hear:

- Have a nice day.
- Awesome.
- No Problem
- There you go....
- "Like".
- At the end of the day....
- I'm on it, 24/7
- NEXT!!!

Words and clichés such as these....cause customers to tune out and to completely miss the message (assuming there is one). As an example, "Have a nice day" is a well-intentioned, but fairly useless phrase...that seems to have caught on with everyone....everywhere. Whatever!!

How much better would it be to say...."Thank you for visiting us today. I appreciate your business. Please come back again soon."

How often do you hear....after YOU say thank you to a retail clerk....."NO PROBLEM"

Wouldn't it be better to say...."You're welcome!" or "It's my pleasure.". Or..."Thanks for coming in today. Please come back again soon, and when you do, ask for me....Joan Thomas....I'll take great care of you."

There are exchanges like this in every business. From how you greet customers on the phone when they call to how you say goodbye after they buy something from you....and everywhere in between.

Examine these exchanges and the words you use with your employees. See if you can discover a better way to say what you really mean. You'll find that there are better words to use....better ways to engage your customers....better ways to say "thank you"...better ways to encourage conversations.

One of the very productive approaches that I use with my clients is to conduct a "Touchpoint Analysis". We start by identifying every point at which a customer comes in contact with your business, and then, with the help of your employees, find better ways to handle each customer touchpoint. Better ways to answer complaints, better ways to say thank you, better ways to fix problems.

Your customers will notice. They will hear the words you use. They will feel special for having come to your business because you and your employees took the time to use the right words.

(426 words)



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