

## **Train, Train and Train Some More – Else They Forget**

**by Lori Jo Vest**

I've visited my primary care doctor's office twice in the last six months. On both occasions, I've experienced fascinating examples of customer service ignorance. I've written about it once – when the woman at the counter told me to “go sit down,” so she could continue with her conversation with the other patient. “I'll get back to you in a minute,” she had said. “Whoa,” I thought at the time, “who are you to tell me what to do?” My Gladys attitude came on like gangbusters. I was miffed within the first 30 seconds of my visit.

The latest follow-up appointment wasn't any better and I'm wondering what the heck is going on at this particular medical practice. Three different people, three different customer service approaches that were alienating to me, the customer. While it may seem like a small thing, the staff members at this business are lacking in what many would call “the social graces.”

Social graces, in this case, are defined as the manners and niceties that are used in your culture to make others feel comfortable and welcome.

When I go to a place of business, even a doctor's or dentist's office, I expect to feel welcomed and respected. Did the woman who sat at her computer monitor, munching on a pineapple as I signed in, glancing at me but refusing to say hello, contribute to my feeling welcome at my doctor's office? No, I felt like an inconvenience. Did the medical technician who asked, “what do you need?” inspire my confidence? Nope. I wondered why she was asking me, instead of looking at my chart.

Were they acting this way purposefully? Probably not. They were simply not trained to understand that part of their job is making their customers feel comfortable. They've not been given the easy-to-remember scripted answers to challenging questions, the ones that make every visitor feel like coming back. They've not been instructed on how to skillfully manage mistakes and turn every customer contact moment into an opportunity to strengthen the relationship. Maybe they'd been told once, at an orientation when they first started with this office, how to greet a customer, but when it wasn't reinforced with reminders or regular meetings, they forgot.

Customer loyalty is more important than ever when customers have less money to spend. Take customer service seriously and your effort will come back to you in increased sales. What can you do right now to enhance your service? Read books about what the best-in-the-business do for their customers. (You can start with “Who's Your Gladys? How to Turn Even the Most Difficult Customer into Your Biggest Fan” [here](#).) Attend workshops and group meetings to keep sharpening your skills. Train, train and train – you AND your employees. Make sure that all of you have the tools you need to perform at the highest possible levels of customer service. Then

reinforce the positive behavior at meetings and in communications so you don't forget. Your customers will appreciate it!

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*Co-author of the customer service bestseller, "Who's your Gladys? How to Turn Even the Most Difficult Customer into Your Biggest Fan," Lori Jo Vest has been involved in relationship-based sales and customer service for over 20 years. She has developed extensive marketing, sales and customer service expertise through her work in business-to-business sales and marketing positions. She consults with mid-sized and second stage businesses on methods to enhance their sales and customer service efforts through one-on-one awareness campaigns, methods for developing personal connection and custom strategies for long-term relationship building. You can reach Lori at [lori@lorijovest.com](mailto:lori@lorijovest.com).*

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