



Ask SCORE for Business Advice

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Appreciation Tips by Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt

After last week’s column on appreciation marketing, a business owner remarked that it was another expense that his business couldn’t afford. It was an interesting comment given that the column tried to emphasize that it costs much less to keep customers and employees than to find new ones. Based partly on some personal experiences, I promised that this week would feature some low-cost ideas.

A few months ago, I was eating at my favorite burrito restaurant with my family when the owner made a point of coming over to the table and presenting a few coupons to use on future purchases. “I see you in here all the time, and I appreciate your business,” he said. Not only did he make our day, he also cemented our loyalty.

On a busy shopping day, I walked into an area department store. Unexpectedly, a clerk greeted me with a piece of candy and sincere welcome. It was a nice touch and felt good to be appreciated.

Appreciation can be a thank you and a welcome and the extra effort taken by a clerk to help find an item. It can be eye contact, a handshake, and a sincere inquiry. It is an attitude that typically starts at the top, with the business owner or manager, and filters throughout the entire organization.

More than an expense, appreciation is an attitude. If you consider your personal experiences, where do you like to shop? Where do you feel appreciated?

Shoppers have many choices; the fact that they choose your store or your business should be celebrated. Employees can select among many employers; they chose to work for you.

Many marketing experts recommend that an appreciation plan be in writing to emphasize its importance. Some businesses select an employee as an appreciation ambassador to set an example and train staff. Staff meetings can be used to brainstorm for ideas and highlight triumphs.

Your plan might include: small give-a-ways; a friends and family event with refreshments and special discounts; a presale event where regular customers are invited in before opening to the general public; learning the names of customers; listening; thank

you cards; rewards for referrals; saying thank you: providing free set-up or delivery; leading the customer to an item rather than telling them where to go; attaching something with a purchase like free picture hangers with a frame or candles with a birthday cake; providing some services for free such as adjusting a watch band or cleaning eyeglasses, and frequent buyer programs.

Appreciation has become so rare that almost all of us can remember those instances when a business made that extra effort. Pay attention the next time you're standing at a checkout. Usually the clerk rings up the purchase and the customer is the one who says thank you. And that is exactly the opposite of what should happen.

If you'd like to learn more about the necessity of research, contact the Green Bay Chapter of SCORE. Visit www.greenbayscore.org or call Cindy Gokey at 920-496-8930 for information.

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