

Communicating with **NANCY STERN** COMMUNICATION PLUS

Is Customer Service Gone for Good?

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The ICSA (International Customer Service Association) released some data a while ago saying it costs five times as much to go out and get a new customer as it does to maintain a current customer.

They also said you can get over 80% of customers back if you handle complaints in a timely and thoughtful manner.

And, they concluded a well-handled problem usually breeds more loyalty than you had prior to the negative encounter.

So, wouldn't it make sense to simply be nice and treat your customers with respect? Instead I keep hearing about rude customer service people, outsourced service to places where the language barrier erodes communication, and in many cases, no service at all.

A friend of mine has coined the phrase "Social Badness" relating to rude behavior. He says "Social Goodness Ain't Rocket Science." Daniel Goleman, author of the best seller *Emotional Intelligence*, has a new book titled *Social Intelligence*. His discussion is a critique of society's disconnection in the age of the iPod, constant digital connectivity and multitasking. In other words, the more connected we get, the more disconnected we are becoming. He doesn't condone multitasking in our digital world as a free pass to be "socially bad,"

Why Do Customers Quit?

1%	Die
3%	Move Away
5%	Develop Other Friendships
9%	Competitive Reasons
14%	Product Dissatisfaction
68%	Quit Because of an Attitude of Indifference Toward Customers by Some Employee

Source: International Customer Service Association

Be nice to people on your way up because you'll meet them on your way down.

Jimmy Durante

and yet, that's what many of us are routinely experiencing.

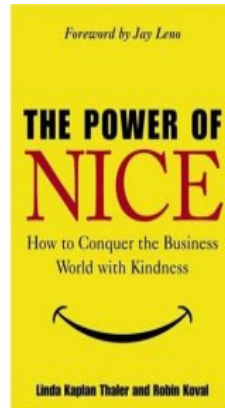
Here's a recent case in point. I hired an AV company to shoot some video of me giving a speech at a conference. The bid I got included a fee for tape stock. Prior to the event I asked the crew to take care of some lighting and sound issues. After my speech, I had to run to catch a plane so I paid for the video. I expected to get two 60 minute tapes, but I got one tape, set to LP mode, that was actually on a recycled tape from what looked to be someone's wedding. The video and sound quality was so poor it was unusable.

I left the camera guy a voice mail explaining my displeasure as soon as I saw the tape. I followed this up with an email. I waited two days

for a response. I called again and spoke to someone who agreed to refund my money. I asked to get an email confirmation at which time the owner of the company got on the phone. He yelled at me, berated me, insulted me and then, he hung up on me! That's right, he threw a tantrum and hung up before I could say anything. Needless to say I stopped payment on my check and sent an email to that effect. He replied with a rude and insulting email calling me a petty thief. I didn't reply to him but I did alert my client who was also his customer and she plans to get bids from other AV companies for next year's event.

You never know who will tell whom about you—so just be nice!

How Nice Are You?



In an era of corporate greed and books titled *Swim with the Sharks*, *Leadership Secrets of Atilla the Hun*, *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*, and *Leadership Sopranos Style*, one wonders what might be next. *Backstabbing 101* or perhaps *How to Kill Your Customers?* Linda Kaplan Thaler and Robin Koval had a different idea. How about just being nice? Based on their years of success in one of the most cutthroat businesses, these partners wrote ***The Power of Nice***.

Positive impressions are like seeds and negative impressions are like germs.

Thaler & Koval

Kaplan Thaler and Koval have moved to the top of the advertising industry by following a simple but powerful philosophy: **It pays to be nice**. They are the owners of the Kaplan Thaler Group, the billion-dollar ad agency responsible for the wildly successful AFLAC advertising campaign (the one with the duck). Their other clients include Office Depot, US Bank, Outback Steakhouse, Dawn, etc. These two dynamic women built their agency, not with spears and intimidation, but with flowers and chocolates. "Nice doesn't mean being naïve or being a marshmallow—it means knowing how to get what you want without having to step over everyone in your wake," says Koval.

The book and the authors have been featured on Nightline, The Today Show, Inside Edition, and The Fox News Channel. They've been written about in The New York Times, Time Magazine, USA Today, ADWEEK, O (the Oprah Magazine), and Glamour Magazine, to name just a few. In every article or news clip as well as throughout the book, they show how nice people can really finish first.

Their website is loaded with cool stuff like clips from television interviews, articles from magazines and newspapers and a quick quiz you can take to see just how nice you really are. Check it out at www.thepowerofnice.com.

So, the next time you even think about being mean, remember what Kaplan-Thayer says, "Meanness is so last Millennium. If you do something nasty, it can get out on the internet or to masses in email and everyone will know about it right away. It's better to just be nice."

Email Your Questions to Nancy@nancystern.com

Q *I'm so busy just getting things done on a daily basis that I hardly have any time to focus on my customers. Can you help?*

A In his book *Service America*, Karl Albrecht talks about Jan Carlzon's "moments of truth" as they relate to relationships with clients and customers. A "moment of truth" can be anything that is communicated to an observer about you. For example, when a customer enters your environment, is the area clean or are there papers cluttered about and coffee stains on the desk or rug? Are the plants alive or are there dead leaves on

the floor? "Moments of truth" add up and one thing you can always do matter how busy you are is be sure you are projecting exactly the message you want to project. Beware of messy cubicles and be aware of how you speak to people.

Be sure to return phone calls and emails in a timely manner, and whenever the opportunity presents itself, make a magic moment for your customers. This means simply do something extra to help them out. I once had a need to get some audio cassette tapes packaged and shrink-wrapped in a hurry and, although it wasn't his normal service, the owner of the print shop I used took care of it for me. He made a magic moment for me and he has been my printer ever since!

*Raise your
smile,
not your voice!*

J. Rodriguez

How to be Nice

Here are some tips from the book *The Power of Nice*:

Smile More (it feels good and is infectious).

Dole Out Praise Generously.

Provide Candy (serotonin gets released and people listen better).

Congratulate Competitors if they Win an Account from You (the authors say send flowers and then let it go).

Bring Your Baggage to Work (once you can talk about your personal stuff you can let it go and be more productive).

Turn Enemies into Allies. Assume Good Will.

on the spot

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Because how you say what you say, matters.™

www.nancystern.com

Phone: 858-792-2768

Fax: 858-792-2745

Email: nancy@nancystern.com

Whether you're experiencing change, managing people, connecting with customers and co-workers, or making presentations, getting your message across effectively is vital to your success.

Nancy Stern custom designs keynotes, breakouts and educational programs to enhance communication effectiveness; to help increase productivity, profitability and peace of mind; and to impact the bottom line where it matters most—with results.

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Leadership Dynamics™

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Powerful Presentations

Facilitate to Motivate and Manage Conflict™

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Shift Happens: Managing the Dynamics of Change

Team Building for Productivity

Generations Jive: Intergenerational Communication Tips™

Should You Stay or Should You Grow? Reaping the Rewards of Risk-Taking™

Why Nancy Stern?

Nancy Stern, MA is the president/owner and senior consultant of Communication Plus, a consulting firm in San Diego specializing in leadership and employee development. Since 1972, she has taught thousands the art and science of effective communication. She is a former columnist with the *San Diego Daily Transcript* and has taught at the University of California San Diego and San Diego State University Management Development Center.

She inspires managers, employees and individuals of all ages through the

simple, yet powerful, lesson that *how you say what you say, matters™*. Personal experiences form the foundation of her programs, creating presentations that are personal, professional and practical. The result: Improvement of the "whole person" and therefore, the "whole organization."

She is an EMMY award-winner, who produced and appeared in the national PBS television series *Communicating With Nancy Stern* (1990-95) and she is the coauthor of *101 Stupid Things Trainers Do To Sabotage Success*.

Nancy holds a Master of Arts degree in Communication Education from Michigan State University and is a member of the American Society for Training and Development and the National Speakers Association.



Nancy Stern