

Create a Positive, Upbeat, "Can-Do" Workforce and Dazzle the Customer with Your Caring!

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**By JoAnna Brandi**

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Given the choice of dealing with a positive, upbeat employee with a "can-do" attitude or dealing with a disgruntled, distracted, uninterested one, which would you choose? No contest. Customers always want the best experience possible; they want it to be easy and pleasant to do business with your company. Enter the real challenge of "Relationship Management," the relationships. Until all of our business is done electronically, and much of it might be, managers, in addition to making sure the work gets done, still need to be concerned with the performance of the most important link in the customer connection – people.

Whether answering the phone, fixing equipment, selling a product or reconciling an unpaid invoice, the quality of the interaction between one human being and another is what will be judged by the customer to determine how much you care about them and their business. If the state of your relationship skills does not equal or exceed your sales and marketing skills, your "lifetime" relationship is in danger.

As a manager you should know that survey after survey reports that people prefer to do business with a positive, upbeat person. As a customer, you instinctively know that people want to do business with people who enjoy what they are doing, are having a good time doing it and genuinely care about being able to help you solve your problem, or achieve your goals. So, here are some tips on creating a more positive, up-beat, can-do work force.

1. Remember, the best teacher is a good example. First examine your own behavior. Are you walking the positive talk or are you mumbling beneath you breath, "3 more days 'til Friday." Take great care to listen to your own language. Do you frame things in the positive, or do you often start your sentences with "No." Do you say "Yes, but.." a lot, negating the first half of your sentence with your last? If so, purchase a copy of "Learned Optimism" by Martin Seligman for your corporate library and inhale it. Then pass it on. Optimistic people adapt easier to change, are more creative, have more fun and are healthier than pessimistic ones. They live longer too. Think about it, looking for innovation? Think optimism, that's one way to get there.

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2. Learn (and teach) the power of positive self-talk. Often our internal chatter is negative. Reprogram your own chatter and then listen carefully for signs of it in others. When you hear someone saying, "Boy am I stupid," gently coach them away from that attitude by replying with "Don't be so hard on yourself, you're not stupid. You may have made a bad decision, we all do, from time to time, let's talk about that, what you've learned, and how to avoid it in the future." Our bodies respond to our self-talk, if we tell ourselves we are disorganized, we behave just that way. Tell yourself, with conviction, you are an organized person, and the behavior will begin to change. Our brain responds literally, like our computers. Learn to replace negative programming with positive.

3. Ban Whining. One whiner in the group can bring everyone down. A whiner is like an infection – it spreads. Put one strong whiner in a room and they can turn it into a pity party. Stop it at the source. Learn to spot them during the interview process. Don't hire them in the first place, unless you are

prepared to keep vigilance over their behavior and attempt to change it. Good luck. Whiners love whining. Put a "No whining" sign on your door.

4. Teach people the art of "win/win." In our competitive society we have a win/lose mentality. This may be a good strategy to fill a sports stadium, not a good way to run a company. Help people to understand that thinking "Win/Win" opens up the possibility for new solutions. Remember, in the 21st century, it's innovation and creativity that will give us the edge, innovation comes from open minds and "possibility thinking."

5. Dump the drama. Melodrama. It sells tabloids, and gets people to watch "Hard Copy" on TV, but it's something you don't need in your company. It saps valuable creative energy. If you've been using "Crisis Management" as your modus operandi, get out of the office, read a few good books, (like Steven Covey's), benchmark with "new thinkers", and learn a new style. Crisis management is passe, wasteful and destructive.

6. Learn, teach and reward "Time-out" stress management techniques. A recent poll says that 90% of all Americans live in a state of chronic stress. YIKES!!!! No wonder customers get treated so poorly. Make sure people understand the role they play in controlling their own stress. We don't have control over circumstances; we do have control of how we perceive them. Take a deep breath, count to ten, walk away (physically or mentally) when you have to and call a "Time-out." Short circuit stress on the way in. Learn good stress management skills and teach them. Reinforce them. "Bob, I noticed how well you reacted with that angry customer yesterday, I was glad to see you take a deep breath and not react defensively – good job – you saved a valuable customer, and your own health as well. I'm proud to have you on the team."

7. Encourage people to live in the "now." Dwell on the past only long enough to figure out what you want to learn from it, and then move on. Stop talking about "the good old days." What is important is what is going on right now. Give your fullest attention to exactly what you are doing now. Do it well, do it right and enjoy it. Customers can always tell if you are giving them your undivided attention, and they really appreciate it.

8. Start a list called "The 10 Best Things about Working Here." Let people add to it and watch it grow.

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It's fun, positive and a great way to focus people on what's right with your business. After the list is finished start one called "Ten More.." Remember you get more of what you focus on.

9. Get psyched! Recognize that almost 80% of what the average person takes in is negative. You've got a job to do. Create a positive sanctuary in your workplace. Develop a corporate library that includes all kinds of motivational literature, audio and videotapes. Play audiotapes and videotapes in lunchrooms, keep inspirational books around, start discussion groups. Create positive energy, people inside and outside the company will feel it and want to come back for more.

10. Don't worry, be happy. Playing upbeat music helps lift your spirits. Challenge the staff to develop the "Happiest" of happy music tapes, a collection of tunes that will keep people smiling and whistling while they work. (They make great coming to and going home from tapes too.)

11. Smile. When you activate the smiling muscles in your face, you activate the "happy" brain chemicals that help you feel good. You can't be depressed when you are smiling, and smiles are contagious. So, smile.

As a manager, it's your responsibility to help to create an experience for your customer that has the word "value" all over it. Customers respond better to a company that provides them with a quality product at a fair price served up by positive, upbeat, can-do people. Aw come on, who wants to do business with a grump?

JoAnna Brandi is Publisher of JoAnna Brandi's Customer Care Coach TM a weekly training program designed to teach managers "The Art and Science of Exquisite Customer Care." You can sign up to get her latest tips and get your personalized weekly coaching program at <http://www.customercarecoach.com>. You can reach via email: <mailto:joanna@customercarecoach.com>.

### **Discerning The Loving Heart**

**By Margaret Paul, Ph.D.**

How often have you had the experience of connecting with someone - a friend or a potential partner - who turns out to be an uncaring person? At first you think this is a really good person, and then down the line you discover that the person is self-centered, narcissistic, angry and uncaring. You wonder how you could be so wrong, and what can you do differently next time?

I have discovered in my 35 years of counseling that people seem to decide very early in their lives whether or not they want to care about and have compassion for others' feelings. As a result, people have different levels of the willingness to feel others' feelings. Some of us deeply feel others' pain and joy, while other people don't. Some people can recall caring about others' pain and joy from a very young age, while other people remember being concerned mostly with their own feelings and needs.

The people who have chosen the deeper level of compassion are often the ones that become the

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caretakers, while the less compassionate people become the takers. Caretakers are people who have learned to take responsibility for others' feelings and well-being, while takers are people who expect others to take responsibility for their feelings and well-being and often blame others when they don't take on this responsibility.

If you are a compassionate person who easily feels others' feelings, you might find yourself drawn to people who are in pain. Your compassionate heart naturally wants to help those people who are in pain, not only out of caring, but also because their pain is painful to you. The problem is that this person might not care about your feelings as much as you care about his or hers.

So, how do you become discerning of who has a loving, caring and compassionate heart? The first step is to focus on developing as much compassion for your own feelings as you have for others. Often, very caring people leave themselves out, caring about others far more than they care about themselves. This leaves them vulnerable to becoming the caretaker for someone who just wants someone else to take care of them, and then gets angry when you don't do it "right." If you develop compassion for yourself, you will start to feel much more quickly when someone is not really caring about you. If you are just focused on another's feelings, you won't notice what you feel, and it is your own feelings that allow you to discern caring from a lack of caring.

The next step is to understand and accept that, no matter how caring you are to others, you have no control over how caring others are with you. You can't make someone be caring, and the more you take care of another's feelings and well-being while ignoring your own, the less caring the other will be. The other person becomes a mirror for your lack of caring about yourself.

The more you learn to take full, 100% responsibility for your own feelings, the more another's lack of caring will be intolerable to you. The more you are able to stay tuned into yourself and trust your own perceptions, the quicker you will discern a lack of caring in others. The more you accept your lack of control over getting others to be caring, the quicker you will let go of people who are intent on getting caring but not much concerned with giving it.

It really doesn't take long to discern the loving heart once you have compassion for yourself, trust your perceptions, and accept your lack of control over others. People betray their intention to either give love or to get it, or to give to get, with everything they say and do. With practice, you can learn to discern the loving heart very early in a relationship. If you want to stop recreating the same relationships over and over, then develop your power of discernment.

Margaret Paul, Ph.D. is the best-selling author and co-author of eight books, including "Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By You?" She is the co-creator of the powerful Inner Bonding healing process. Learn Inner Bonding now! Visit her web site for a FREE Inner Bonding course:

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