



The Names You Want to Remember



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by John Tschohl

What's the sweetest sound that you can hear? According to recent research studying brain activation, the answer is: your name. A person's name is a precious possession. Remembering a name represents a simple, but powerful customer care skill that people notice and appreciate.

Everyone loves hearing their own name! Remembering, recognizing, and using your customers' names goes a long way to convincing them that you and your organization care. The banking industry has the perfect opportunity with every customer interaction. Customers give banks numerous opportunities to remember a name, recognize a face, and recall a previous transaction. By quickly—and as personally as possible—using the customer's name, financial institutions can show customers that their satisfaction is a priority. It can turn a regular, repeat customer into a genuinely loyal customer who truly looks forward to their experiences with a financial institution. Banking is based on trust. And the ingredients of trust are good service, the right solutions, and the fact that the bank knows its customers.

Connect with your customer. Bankers have all their customer information right at their fingertips with each transaction. How often do you let them know that you appreciate doing business with them? Every one, five, or ten years? Do you take the time to wish them a "Happy Birthday"? It's a simple connection and pays off for everyone. Does your bank have software that identifies the customer's birthday one week before and the day of the birthday?

When you engage customers on a personal level by doing something as simple as remembering their names, you directly affect how they feel about you and your company. So be on the lookout for little ways to *wow* your customer by using their name. It creates good feelings and trust and, they get the sense that you are in tune with their needs.

The perfect example of using customer names is the technology-based system at Vail Resorts.

I vacation in Vail several times each year. They take extra steps to insure that each of their guests are made to feel special. I carry my season pass with me (under my ski jacket) wherever I go. When I am in the line to get on the lift, I am quickly scanned so they know that I have paid for the ticket. They are trained to immediately use my first name. *“Okay John, you are good to go.”*

Or the use of technology at Delta Airlines. As a Diamond Member, when I call the Diamond Desk their technology has my cell phone number. They answer the phone in 30 seconds, and use my name, asking what they can do for me. It feels good.

Another perfect example is Wilderness Safari in Botswana. I took my wife and son to Botswana and we were amazed at our royal treatment. Everyone from the maids to the cooks and housekeeping staff called us by name. They take very shy people and transform them into warm, customer-driven employees to provide an exceptional experience.

As a customer walks into your bank, how many employees will smile, call the customer by name and say, “Good morning”? It’s so simple but so powerful.

Eliminate the negative. There are a couple of reasons why front-line people do not relate to customers in an intimate way. It’s either *indifference* (they don’t care), *fear* (they see customers as a necessary part of their job, but would rather get through the day with a minimum of interaction), and *lack of training* (most employees don’t understand the importance of using customers’ names).

Accentuate the positive. Utilizing customer names when interacting with them directly is an important part of making people feel like individuals. The implications are:

- People tend to like you more if you use their name during conversations. (But there is a limit; saying their name too much becomes unnatural and insincere).
- People open emails with more consistency if their name is included. (Another reason to ask for a name if you want increased conversions via email.)
- People assume you are more competent if you know their name; it’s a big part of their identity, and if you recall it and use it, you are instantly viewed in a better light in their eyes.

Fact is, less than 5% of companies use their customers’ names, but if you care about your customers, it’s an essential part of winning them over. All customers want to be seen as individuals. They want to feel special and respected. And when they do business with you, they deserve that respect and your courtesy.

Greeting customers by name shows how much you appreciate their business — and helps to turn them into *repeat* customers.

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