

Home

Book of Lists

Buyer's Guide

Classifieds/Events

Corporate Sponsors

Vendor Directory

Articles

Monthly Newsletters

Program Pricing

Contact Us

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Articles, News, Announcements - click Main News Page

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[< Previous Story >](#) [< Next Story >](#)

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The Importance of 'The Little Things'

by John Tschohl, Founder and President, Service Quality Institute, Minneapolis, MN - April 30, 2015

The Importance of "The Little Things" by John Tschohl

"Little things" can be the difference between a big success and failure for a company. The reason is that people react emotionally because of the attention paid to minor details. We all know that when the smile spreads across our customers face, they will be back.

Experience the magic that's associated with doing the little things. Most people think it's the big things that make a big difference but in reality it's the result of a lot of little things being done before that. It's easy to look over the little things and that's probably why so few people do them. It's the little things that enhance what you are doing.

Be an observer of your customers. Some people might react well to the good-ol-boy personality, a slap on the back and a hearty laugh. Others would be appalled by such treatment. Make a goal to study customer behavior and attitudes. Recognize different personality types and adapt your approach and communication styles accordingly.

Follow the leaders. Industry leaders have built their businesses around superior service. It all revolves around...*Friendliness*. In my 10th edition, *Achieving Excellence Through Customer Service*, we consider friendly behavior to be:

1. Making eye contact
2. Smile. Greet the customer.
3. Use the customer's name if known or ask for it. (Happens 1% of the time)
4. Answer questions or obtain answers quickly.
5. Think speed
6. Be sincere. Talk and act in a personal way.
7. Give the customer total attention
8. Speak in a friendly manner.
9. Listen. Ask questions to obtain information to resolve any complaint they might have.
10. Offer unsolicited help now and then.
11. Make positive parting comments such as "We appreciate your business," and, "Come see us again."

Treat your customers as your friends. Recently I was at the Mayo Clinic having some tests done. It was about 7:30 PM and I had to leave a specimen for results. The lab was closed and the only person that was in the area was the janitor who was cleaning the floors and emptying the trash. I didn't really think he could help but, he asked me why I was there and immediately he asked me to wait for a moment and he would get someone. Just seconds later, I was taken care of. Just think if he had not been willing to help, I would have had to return the next day. The Mayo Clinic trains everyone that works at their facility to take care of their customers. It's what they are famous for.... besides their excellent medical care of course.

Disney is dedicated to service. All employees are trained to look for unexpected things to do like pick up trash lying on the ground, adjust displays that are off centered, wipe off dirt on seats, and even pick out a weed they see growing in a crack in the sidewalks. They are trained to correct small things to make a big difference and....it works. If a guest looks confused or lost, they are empowered to drop whatever they are doing and assist the guest and even give them gifts to make them feel better about their experience.

Vail Resorts really gets it. If employees observe that someone is having a difficult time or is inexperienced on the slopes, they will offer a FREE group ski lesson. They understand that customer service doesn't have to be just about solving problems, it can be about creating opportunities. While other vacation destinations charge for taking pictures, Vail Resorts shoots pictures for free. Then they make it easy for you to post the picture on Facebook – with the Vail Resorts logo on each photo.

Starbucks is the most successful coffee company in the world with more than 19,000 stores in 62 countries. It is viewed as one of the best places to work in America. With 40 million customers a week Howard Schultz remembers what his mother said. *“You are the company you keep. Show me your friends and I will show you who you are”*.

We are all customers and as customers we expect fairness, courtesy, openness, and pleasant, **friendly** service. It's all these little things that make big impressions and superior service.

John Tschohl is an international service strategist and speaker. He is founder and president of the Service Quality Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Described by Time and Entrepreneur magazines as a customer service guru, he has written several books on customer service. In 2014 he released his 10th edition of Achieving Excellence Through Customer Service. The Service Quality Institute (<http://www.customer-service.com>) has developed more than 26 customer service training programs that have been distributed and presented throughout the world. John's monthly strategic newsletter is available online at no charge. He can also be reached on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

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