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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 and recognizing your customers' names and using their names goes a long way to convincing them that you and your organization care. Your customers give you multiple chances every day to remember a name, recognize a face, and recall a previous transaction, all to show them that their satisfaction is your priority. It can turn a regular, repeat customer into a genuinely loyal customer who truly looks forward to their experiences with you and your company.

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. While remembering and using your customers' names and recognizing their faces can positively affect your personal job performance, your organization feels the impact as well. Use the resources at hand to help you learn, remember and use your customers' names:

- √ credit and debit cards
- √ checks
- √ membership cards
- √ personal identification
- √ account histories
- √ contact management software
- √ reservations

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 and they answer the phone in 30 seconds, 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 and provide an exceptional experience.

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' name, 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” — John Tschohl.

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 including Moving Up. The Service Quality Institute (<http://www.customer-service.com>) has developed more than 26 customer service training programs including Remember Me, 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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