

Briefly Noted

by
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VOLUME 5 • NUMBER 7

SEPTEMBER 2008

Service Stars

Things change. This is certainly true in the world of a professional speaker and trainer. Sometimes clients must cancel or reschedule events at the last minute. This can leave one with an airline ticket that is no longer required.

There was a time that if this happened, the traveller was left with a useless piece of paper. There were no refunds or credits except for the most expensive tickets. Thankfully, airlines have changed this practice. Today, you can cancel even the cheapest ticket available...for a fee.

This happened three times last spring, which meant I had several Air Canada credits to use for future flights. Booking flights using credits can only be done via telephone, which is how I "met" Ann, who works in the airline's reservations department.

For more than an hour, Ann patiently worked to get me the flights I needed. Using my confirmation numbers, she determined the value of my credits. She matched these with the flights I wanted to ensure that each credit was used completely. She suggested ways I could get to my destinations more quickly for less additional cost.

At one point, when it appeared that one flight was cheaper if purchased on-line, she suggested that I do so. Then she arranged through her supervisor to apply one of the credits to this flight.

Throughout the process, I felt that Ann was "on my side". She was friendly and seemed committed to reducing the additional costs related to utilizing my credits. After each booking was completed, she had me check to ensure I had received the confirmation e-mails and that everything was correct. It was only at the end of our conversation that I discovered that the task of completing my bookings had required her to stay on the line with me for half an hour beyond the scheduled end of her shift.



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Nelson's Point of View

The Importance of 360-Degree Recognition

If you have a boss, mark Thursday, October 16 on your calendar. It's National Boss Day – also known as Bosses or Boss's Day, depending on whom you ask. This is a time to honour those men and women who supervise others.

It also reminds us that everyone – including your boss – needs and likely deserves to be acknowledged for the job she does. In the words of the American industrialist Charles Schwab, "I have yet to find the man, however exalted his station, who did not do better work and put forth greater effort under a spirit of approval than under a spirit of criticism."

Staff recognition is frequently thought of as if it was water, that can only trickle down the managerial hierarchy. Boss Day is an opportunity to do something to pump recognition upward within the organizational structure. Take time to let your boss know that you appreciate her for what she does.

"Boss, thank you for purchasing that new computer program. It has made my job much easier and I can produce reports for clients more quickly."

"Boss, thank you for adjusting my schedule so I can come in later. I really appreciate being able to be at home with my son until he leaves for school."

"Boss, thank you for sitting down to talk to me about my goals. It is great to know the company is willing to help me advance my career."

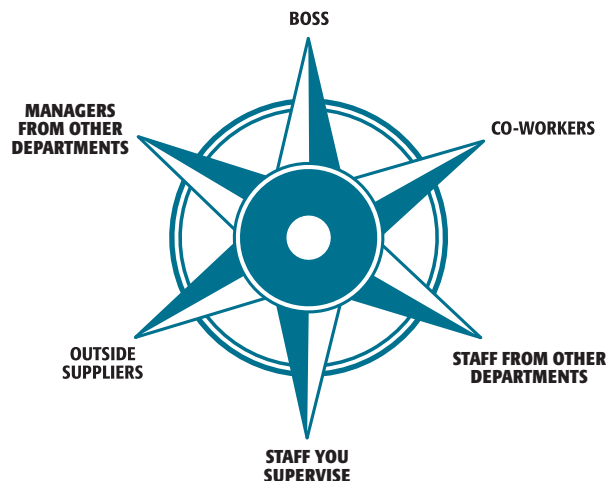
What staff recognition needs is the equivalent of 360-degree appraisal systems, in which feedback is sought from people at different levels of the organization. This is often illustrated with a diagram that shows arrows representing feedback from managers, subordinates, and peers converging on the individual who is the subject of the feedback.

The model for 360-degree recognition would be different. Recognition would radiate out in all directions from the centre. To show that recognition can flow in both directions, the individual at the centre would be connected to others by lines, rather than by arrows.

In organizations where a culture of appreciation flourishes, all staff members would have their own 360-degree recognition circles. By encouraging 360-degree recognition, organizations can ensure that all staff, no matter what their level in the organization, will be regular recipients of recognition.

One last thought about National Boss Day

While National Boss Day is a great idea, recognition should not be a once-a-year event. We know that other staff members won't remain motivated and committed if they are only recognized once each year, so why should we expect people who just happen to be managers to be any different?



360-DEGREE RECOGNITION

Quote of the Month

*"I do not like to repeat successes,
I like to go on to other things."*

– Walt Disney

Leadership Development Certificate – In Class or On-line

You can now earn Keyano College's new Leadership Development Certificate without ever setting foot in a classroom at the college's Fort McMurray, Alberta campus. All five modules required to complete the certificate are available on-line, but you can complete some of the modules during four-hour classroom sessions and others on-line.

The five required modules available in the classroom (see schedule) or on-line are: *Essential Skills of Leadership*; *Essential Skills of Communicating*; *Communicating Up*; *Providing Performance Feedback*; and *Delegating*.

Three additional modules – *Coaching Job Skills*; *Resolving Conflicts*; and *Motivating Team Members* – are only available on-line.

To register for the on-line modules, visit www.seaconsultingonline.com/keyano.htm. When you register, you will receive a password that will give you unlimited access to the course for 365 days. You will also be linked to a tutor, who will suggest additional resources and activities, and who is prepared to respond to your questions related to the course material.

The cost of each classroom or on-line module is \$149 plus GST.

Leadership Development Certificate Classroom Sessions:

- **Essential Skills of Leadership**
Friday, Sept. 26 • 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Instructor: Janet Douglas
Location: Bob Lamb IEC, Room 140
- **Essential Skills of Communicating**
Friday, Oct. 10 • 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Instructor: Nelson Scott
Location: Bob Lamb IEC, Room 142
- **Communicating Up**
Thurs, Oct. 30 • 12:30 – 4:30 p.m.
Instructor: Doug Nish
Location: Bob Lamb IEC, Room 140
- **Providing Performance Feedback**
Friday, Nov. 21 • 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Instructor: Nelson Scott
Location: Bob Lamb IEC, Room 144
- **Delegating**
Friday, Dec. 12 • 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Instructor: Nelson Scott
Location: Bob Lamb IEC, Room 140

To register for modules taught in the classroom, phone (780) 792-2688 or visit the Registrar's Office at Keyano College, 8115 Franklin Avenue (8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. weekdays).

Finding the Secrets of Customer Service Excellence in the Advice of Parents

"Parents only seem to teach their children two things these days... 'Look both ways before crossing the street,' and 'Never talk to strangers'... and I want them to talk to strangers!"

These words belonged to a hardware store owner with whom I was meeting to discuss the possibility of my supplying customer service training for his staff. His expression of frustration with modern child rearing came in response to my inquiry about what was preventing his staff from providing the level of service he and his customers desired.

With his words fresh in my mind – and a commitment to training in my calendar – I left the office area. As I passed through the store, I recalled that I needed material to complete a project at home. Not sure where to find what I needed, I approached a store employee, who was restocking shelves nearby.

Without more than a glance in my direction, he continued with his task as I requested directions to the right department. "Over there," he responded, interrupting his task only long enough to gesture toward the back of the store.

Immediately, two familiar pieces of parental advice popped into my mind: "Don't talk when your mouth is full" and "It's not nice to point".

This was an aha moment. Rather than bemoaning

the advice that his younger employees had received from their parents, the owner should have embraced it. It is all his staff – and yours – needs to remember to enable them to provide service excellence:

"Look both ways before you cross the street." – With these words, parents encourage their children to be aware of what is happening around them. Instead of marching up and down store aisles or the hallways of schools, offices, or hospitals as if wearing blinders, they should look both ways for customers in need of information, directions, or service.

"Never talk to strangers." – Good advice on the playground or street, but not relevant in a service setting where there are no strangers. Customers and clients are "guests" who were invited into your business "home" through advertising, signage, window displays, or attractive facilities.

During his But My Mother Said, "Never Talk to Strangers" presentations, Nelson Scott translates the advice that participants recall hearing from their parents into customer service wisdom.

High-Value, Low-Cost Staff Recognition

- When a customer writes a complementary letter about a staff member, be sure to share it with the staff member – then consider posting the letter on a bulletin board, reading it at a staff meeting, publishing it in the staff newsletter, or placing it on the company website.
- Instead of celebrating employees' birthdays, celebrate the anniversary of their joining the company. No one has control over their birth date, but they do control whether or not they will be around for another year with the company. That's something worth celebrating!
- Spotlight new ideas or improved practices on your website – and the person responsible for the innovation.
- Include years of service on employees' name badges... "a staff member for seven years".
- Distribute thank-you cards at a staff meeting and encourage everyone to write at least one thank-you to a co-worker. Collect the cards and deliver them to staff members' mailboxes.
- E-mail an employee to thank her for solving a difficult problem or preparing a report. Copy her colleagues or friends.
- Include stories of staff members' efforts and successes on the company website.
- Pitch stories about employees to the local media. If possible, tie what the employee does to a special week or a national event. Reporters love to be able to have a local angle to a story.
- Note the employee anniversary date for each employee. On that date, congratulate him. Take time to review the past year and his contributions to the company during that time. Thank him for what he has done.
- Make it easy for employees to recognize co-workers by ensuring that a supply of thank-you cards is always accessible. And don't worry if some are used for personal thank-yous. Writing them is good practice.
- Profile employees in staff and company publications. Describe how they contribute to the company as well as their outside interests and community involvement. Include quotes from the subject of the profile, as well as from their colleagues.
- Provide opportunities for employees to attend a conference, to hear a well-known author or outstanding speaker, or to attend off-site training.



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