

Briefly Noted

by Nelson Scott



VOLUME 6 • NUMBER 5

AUGUST 2009

Service Stars ★★★★★

On a grey, overcast Irish morning, Barry greeted visitors as they gathered outside the Kinsale tourist office for his historical walking tour (www.historicstrollkinsale.com). As a group assembled, he spoke to each person.

"What's your name? Where are you from? What do you do there?" He used this information to connect with visitors to his community.

"You're a teacher? So is my sister. She works with young children."

"What do you speak on? Customer service? That's important. I'm really in the customer service business, as well."

Before the tour began, Barry explained his satisfaction-first policy. Customers weren't asked to pay until the end of the tour, and then only if they were satisfied. If they found the tour was not meeting their expectations, they were welcome to leave it at any time without being asked to pay.

How different from the pay-in-advance, tip-at-the-end tours one usually encounters.

As the group waited for the scheduled start time, Barry offered advice on what else to see and do in Kinsale. He particularly recommended the Charles Fort, built by the English in 1677. The hilltop fort guards access to Kinsale's natural harbour. "From there, you can really understand why the harbour is so important."

Before joining the tour, we let Barry know that we would have to leave before it ended, to get to Cork Airport in time for our flight back to London. He encouraged us to join the tour and leave when we felt necessary.

As the tour began, Barry pointed to a supply of umbrellas, suggesting we take one as protection from the "Irish sunshine".

The tour itself was informative, but after 45 minutes we had to leave. I offered €12 for the two of us, explaining that despite enjoying the tour, the time had come to leave for the airport. Barry refused. "It's on me." I protested that we were satisfied, but once again he refused and turned toward the tour's next stop.

"OK," I thought, stuffing the money into my pocket. "But I'll be back...for the whole tour."

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Nelson's Point of View

Understanding customers' tastes key to service success

I normally wouldn't begin with a warning, but in this case it seems necessary. I am about to rant about something that really isn't all that important to most, but is to me. If the prospect bothers you, I suggest moving along to another article, which will have a calmer tone.

I am unapologetic about the emotional outburst that follows. It is how I feel about the topic. I do assure you that before I conclude I will make a point — one that is important to anyone who serves customers.

What the world needs is more tea drinkers. More specifically, what restaurants and hotel catering departments need are more people who understand the tastes of tea drinkers.

As you may have already guessed, I belong to the ranks of those who drink tea. I only drink tea. Never coffee. More than 30 years have passed since my last cup of coffee. I don't like the taste of coffee — not even when it comes as tiramisu, mocha cheesecake or one of those magnificent looking drinks people order to end their dining experience in fine restaurants.

I realize that my distaste for coffee casts me as a social pariah. When I attend breakfast meetings, there is always a thermos of coffee on the table, but it takes a special request to get a pot of tea. When office visits begin with the offer of coffee, I must decline.

When with friends or colleagues at a coffee shop, I listen in awe as they order a "Decaf double tall non-fat extra-dry cappuccino" or "Triple grande sugar-free vanilla latte." (There are actually several websites with instructions on how to order at Starbucks.) By contrast, "Large tea, please," just doesn't have much cachet.

No problem, you may be thinking. One should be able to go through life happily without ever having to experience the taste of coffee. Should be able to, but sadly, that is not the case.

Frequently, when I order tea, what I get tastes more like coffee than tea. How could this be? The reason is all those non-tea drinkers hired by hotels and restaurants who just don't understand what it is like to drink tea. They believe that the same carafe that held coffee one day can hold hot water for tea the next. Just rinse it out (or send it through the dishwasher), fill it with hot water and presto, it's ready. Tea drinkers need only pour water over a tea bag before enjoying their favourite beverage.

Sorry folks, it just doesn't work that way. Once a carafe has held coffee, that flavour never leaves, no matter how much someone scours the container. The essence of coffee is always present, ready to overpower the flavour of black, green or herbal tea.

To their credit, some restaurants and hotels appear to understand that those who choose to drink have made a decision not to drink coffee. A few carafes are permanently labeled "Hot Water Only." Ironically, the people who may understand best the tastes of tea drinkers are those who work in specialized coffee shops, such as Tim Hortons, Starbucks and Second Cup. They will never pour water that tastes of coffee into one of their cups.

Serving customers successfully means looking at what your organization does through the eyes of your customers. Educators need to understand what parents want and need. Healthcare workers must put themselves in the shoes of patients and family members. Retailers have to imagine themselves standing on the other side of the counter.

Doing so is challenging, but the results are rewarding.

*During Nelson Scott's customer service presentations — **But My Mother Said, "Never Speak to Strangers"** and **Customer Service Magic: Changing Complainers into Loyal Customers** — you will be challenged to see to see things as your customers see them.*

Bonus Article

It is understandable that managers feel a sense of relief when a new staff member arrives. After a period of recruitment and interviews, all the vacant positions have been filled. But it's not a time to relax. The manager's focus needs to shift from recruiting staff to retaining those who have been recently hired.

From the time they are hired, new staff members are contemplating their future. Will they stay or will they go? Will they commit to their new employer or to a new job search?

In a bonus article on our website, you will learn ways that you can influence these decisions. You can download **Now that someone has been hiring, the real recruiting begins at:** www.seaconsultingonline.com/realrecruiting.pdf.

Quote of the Month

"The difficulty lies, not in the new ideas, but in escaping from the old ones, which ramify, for those brought up as most of us have been, into every corner of our minds."

**— John Maynard Keynes,
British economist**

High-Value, Low-Cost Staff Recognition

Medical clinics, dental clinics and coffee shops such as Second Cup and Starbucks do it, so why not your organization? In these workplaces, degrees and certificates earned by doctors, dental hygienists and baristas are often displayed. You can do the same thing for your staff. Publicly display their college and university degrees. When staff members complete a training program, frame and display their certificates where customers and co-workers can see them. This creates a professional tone for your organization and demonstrates that staff members' commitment to learning new skills is appreciated.



When a team completes a project successfully, the entire team should be acknowledged. Strengthen the message of appreciation by recognizing each team member individually — with a thank-you note, a small gift or simple face-to-face acknowledgement. Whatever you do, never thank only the team leader. That type of recognition would be inappropriate, devaluing the contributions of the rest of the team members and sending the wrong message about teamwork.



Staff recognition can be listed on one's to-do list:

- Thank George for completing the report on fundraising
- Visit Joan's classroom and provide feedback on the artwork she has been doing with her students
- Write a thank-you card to Ester

But when delivering recognition, take care to ensure that the recipient isn't left feeling that what just happened was simply another item that the boss wanted to check off the list before moving on to other tasks. A way to safeguard against leaving the recipient feeling this way is to provide creative, personalized recognition.



Not sure what to recognize? Here are a few suggestions of behaviours, traits and attitudes you can observe and for which you can recognize staff:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| • Adaptability | • Sense of humour |
| • Cheerfulness | • Service |
| • Caring | • Trustworthiness |
| • Creativity | • Volunteering |
| • Commitment | • Extra effort |
| • Enthusiasm | • Perseverance |
| • Flexibility | • Listening |

Three words describe everything that every employee needs

As she spoke to many of the 16,000 delegates to the 2009 Rotary International convention in Birmingham, England, in June, renowned primatologist, environmentalist and humanitarian Jane Goodall stood before a screen onto which three words were projected:

Knowledge Compassion Action

These words represented the essence of her message about the need to achieve a balance among human communities, animals and the environment. Through Roots and Shoots (www.rootsandshoot.org), a program of the Jane Goodall Institute, students from kindergarten to high school are learning to live in peace and harmony with each other and their environment.

As I listened to Goodall's presentation, I began to find another significance in these words. Simply by substituting "passion" for "compassion," we can use them to define the keys to on-the-job success for people in any work environment.

For anyone to be successful, all three aspects must be present. Each person must possess the knowledge required to do the job, feel passion (or commitment) for what they do and then take action to apply knowledge and passion to achieve what needs to be achieved.

Staff members must have the training and skills required to do the job, but simply having this knowledge isn't enough. Staff members must have a passion and commitment to doing the job well, which often translates into compassion for patients for whom they care, students who they teach or customers who they meet. They must want to make a difference for those they serve.

Just one, without the other, won't do it. People without passion or commitment will never perform at a level consistent with their training. On the other hand,

a passionate employee is unlikely to meet job expectations without the knowledge and skills required to perform job-related tasks.

But even knowledge and passion are meaningless if staff don't apply what they know and what they feel to their work. Staff members must translate their knowledge and passion into action.

Before hiring a new employee, managers need to determine if all three elements of success are present. Finding out if applicants have the right knowledge, training and skill is the easy part. This is the stuff of resumes. Listening to the candidates during an interview can provide clues about their passion for the work.

But something is missing — evidence that what the candidate knows and feels has been reflected in on-the-job performance. Behaviour description interviewing is the right tool to gather information to assess whether the candidate has applied knowledge and passion to previous work, or is a well-educated, apparently well-intentioned individual who may or may not be able to do the job.

By asking candidates to describe how they have responded to situations similar to what they might encounter if hired, the interviewer can find evidence that they applied their knowledge and passion in previous work situations. The people to hire are those whose responses reflect:

- The right knowledge, training and skills
- The right passion and commitment
- The right action — having done the right thing in the right way

*During an **Interview Right to Hire Right** workshop, you can enhance your skill at asking questions to gather high-quality information upon which to base your hiring decisions.*

Speech coach will help take your presentations to the next level

If making presentations is part of your life — whether explaining new procedures to co-workers, speaking to an audience of community members or teaching a classroom of students — here is an opportunity to take your presentations from good to great.

On Thursday evening, September 10, the Edmonton chapter of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers is hosting an evening with Patricia Fripp (www.fripp.com), one of North America's most in-demand speech coaches.

After building a strong keynote speaking business, Patricia began to work with corporate leaders and celebrities to improve their presentation skills. During this fast-moving, highly interactive session you will have chances to ask questions, watch as magic is created in "mini-coaching" sessions, and see why Patricia

Frapp is so well-respected in the speaking industry.

Meetings and Conventions magazine wrote, "Patricia is one of America's 10 most electrifying speakers." *Kiplinger's Personal Finance* magazine says, "The sixth best investment in your career is to attend one of Frapp's speaking schools."

Thursday, September 10 Royal Mayfair Golf & Country Club

5:00 – 6:00 p.m. Registration and Refreshments
6:00 – 9:00 p.m. Presentation by Patricia Fripp

Registration Fee: \$129 for CAPS members; \$149 for non-members. Register by August 30 and receive a *Good to Great* CD at no additional cost (a \$25 value).

For more information and to register, visit www.capsedmonton.com/events.htm.



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