

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS TIPS

SEPTEMBER, 2011

The Business Tips Newsletter is brought to you in partnership by the Dahlonega Downtown Development Authority & the Dahlonega-Lumpkin County Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center.

Beth Ingram
Programs & Communications Coordinator
Dahlonega-Lumpkin County Chamber of Commerce

Customer service is the never-ending pursuit of excellence to keep customers so satisfied that they tell others of the way they were treated in your place of business. Dahlonega-Lumpkin County Chamber of Commerce Programs & Communications Coordinator, Beth Ingram expands on the value of customer service as a powerful sales tool.

Outstanding customer service is a powerful sales tool

Every business has a different definition of customer service because of the diverse types of their products and services. The constants among them are the attributes of customer service.

Here are the 12 key attributes of customer service. How many are present in your company? If you can't answer *yes* to all of the attributes below, you're losing customers to your competition.

1. Dedication to customer satisfaction by every employee in the company.
2. Immediate response to the customer (*now, not tomorrow*).
3. Individuals taking responsibility for customers' needs (*no buck passing*).
4. Do what you say and follow up immediately.
5. Agreement with and empathy for the complaint or situation of the customer.
6. Flexibility to serve specific needs of individual customers (*the ability to go beyond policy*).
7. An empowerment of employees to decide.
8. Consistent on-time delivery.
9. Deliver what you promise before AND after the sale.
10. A zero-defects and error-free delivery program.
11. Outstanding people to serve customers and implement customer service.
12. **Smile** when talking on the phone.

Write down and live your customer service policy! Here are a few examples of ways to get closer to the real boss, your customer...

- Have top management people make sales calls regularly.
 - Install a customer hot line.
 - Make it a policy to return all inquire or complaint calls within 1 hour.
 - Set a goal to resolve every complaint within 24 hours...then shorten it to 12 hours.
 - Have your top staff/management personally answer complaints.
- Create a slogan centered around "(Our Company) means SERVICE." Put it on your walls, on your letterhead, on your literature, on uniforms. Tattoo it on your forehead.

The Sales Bible. The Ultimate Sales Resource. Revised Edition / Jeffrey Gitomer. 2003. John Wiley & sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey. Pg. 230.

KEY DATES:

Post this for your employees to use...

First Friday Night Concert Series

October 7
Great Jazz by "The David Brothers Band"
6:30 PM,
Hancock Park
Final Concert of the 2011 Series

Welcome Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation

2011 Fall Ramble
Preservation Strikes Gold!
Friday, October 7 & Saturday October 8

Appalachian Jam

Every Saturday
Ending October 8,
2-5 PM,
Gold Museum Lawn

Gold Rush Days

October 15 & 16
Downtown Dahlonega

Dahlonega Merchants Association Meeting

Wednesday, October 19
9:00 AM
Back Porch Oyster Bar
Need on the Email list?
Contact Gayle Jones,
gaylejones@gmail.com

3 Keys to Email Marketing Seminar

Wednesday, October 26
9 -11 AM
Continuing Education Building

Farmers & Artists Market

Tuesday & Saturdays
Ending October 29,
7 am-3pm,
Hancock Park



Begin Putting Lights on Trees

Monday, October 24

Downtown Christmas Lights On!

Friday, November 18



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"DAHLONEGA DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (MAIN STREET)"

TOP 5 QUESTIONS ASKED BY VISITORS TO SMALL TOWNS

by JOANNE STEELE on AUGUST 26, 2011
www.ruraltourismmarketing.com

Great Customer service is an area that perennially needs improvement. This is a reminder that the major attraction you have in your small town or rural tourism destination is your people. No review site trumps the personal recommendation of a flesh and blood local. No smartphone can recommend the most scenic and interesting route to your most famous attraction, or a little known fishing hole. We must be tech savvy to compete in this world of instant information and digital relationships. But we must also remember that regardless of whether they bring their gadgets and insist on having high-speed access to them, our visitors, our guests come for the human interaction that is part of our lifestyle in rural communities and small towns. ***Here's the vital task facing every rural business owner.***

Can your employees answer a few simple questions about your town and region? Here are the top five. Think about a few more that are specific to your area. (In my area of northern California one of those is, "how tall is Mount Shasta?")

1. Where is a good place to stay?

Use your Chamber of Commerce to get to know a little about the lodging in and around your town. People ask this in gas stations, restaurants, hardware stores, anywhere there is a smiling face behind a counter. Be ready to answer, or they might drive to the next town.

2. Where is a good place to eat?

It's okay to recommend your own favorite. In fact, that's the best. Visitors love to eat where the locals eat.

3. What is there to do around here?

School your youngest employees on the answer to this one. They are trying to leave and will probably answer "nothing" without some input.

4. How to I get to _____?

Have an old fashioned paper map behind the counter to help people find their way to surrounding communities. And make sure your frontline people know how best to get to your local attractions.

5. Where is a public restroom?

This is a biggie in rural communities. Lots of restaurants have a "customers only" policy. Know the closest public restroom, or, slick yours up and be ready to say, "I'd be happy to have you use ours."

.Suggest that your Chamber post answers to the most vital and relevant questions on their website. It will help visitors, and more importantly, it will help your employees keep current

Learn More About the Contributing Authors

Lisa Barone

<http://smallbiztrends.com/>

Joanne Steele

<http://www.ruraltourismmarketing.com>

5 Benefits of Having a Website for Your Small Business

by LISA BARONE, AUGUST 30, 2011
www.smallbiztrends.com

1. You stop being invisible.

I'm not trying to be flippant, but by creating a website you stop being invisible to the people trying to find you online. More and more studies are telling us about the ROBO effect where customers are learning to research online before buying offline. They're typing their problems or needs into the search engine of their choice and are researching the companies that appear for those queries. If you don't have a Web presence, there's no chance of you showing up and you never even enter into their thought process. In 2011, you can't afford to be invisible.

2. You help control your rankings.

While you can't simply rattle off a list of search terms you want to be found for, you can use search engine optimization basics to help control where your site shows up and for which queries. By creating optimized content, building relevant links and creating a brand that customers want to engage with, you set yourself up as an authority in the eyes of the search engine and increase your chances of appearing for the right queries – the ones paying customers are using to find businesses just like yours. Creating an optimized website helps you to gain important visibility for the right terms.

3. You create another sales tool.

A website is a powerful sales tool and one that allows you to address your customers' concerns, give them the information they need to make a decision and create compelling calls to action. Sure, you can keep placing ads in the Yellow Pages and hope that word-of-mouth generates on its own...or you can build something that inspires it to happen. Your website is your home turf where people can go to seek out trusted information about your company and engage with you on a more personal level. Use it to build confidence in your brand and to give customers important buying information (and incentives).

4. You build authority.

Though the Web has been around for some time, it's true that you didn't always need a website to find your audience. It was a lot easier to market via direct mailings, Yellow page ads and local word-of-mouth. However, today your website and your social presence are the factors that customers are looking for when they research a small business. They want to know that you're stable enough to have a dedicated Web presence. That you'll be around tomorrow should something go wrong. That they can get ahold of you when they need to. By creating a website, you set up shop on the Internet and show customers that this is where they can come to find information about you, to read articles that you've written and to learn more about your company. All of these things build authority. Without a website, you're at a huge disadvantage as a small business owner trying to speak to your customers.

5. You build an email list.

Even if you hate the Web, you probably still like email. I bet you even collect emails from your customers by hand so that you can keep them up to date on what's happening in-store. Having a website allows you to do all of that better because it makes it easier, faster and provides even more incentive for someone to sign up. Create a site that users can trust and then use it to build your email list. Along with your website, that list just may end up being one of your strongest sales tools.

ECO FRIENDLY WEBSITES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Want to improve the “green-ness of your business? Check these recourses:

Energy Star Small Business Network

A government-sponsored program that offers free information about the benefits of having an environmentally conscious business.
www.energystar.gov

Greenbiz.com

Offers valuable articles that discuss various topics of the green revolution.
www.greenbiz.com

Ecopreneurist

Discusses many different ways that small businesses can go green.
www.ecopreneurist.com

Greenwala

Useful articles about the significance of going green for both business and personal life.
www.greenwala.com

DAHLONEGA WELCOMES THE GEORGIA TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION!

Friday, October 7 & Saturday, October 8

If you would like to have your business information included in the event goodie bags, please drop off 200 items at City Hall, by Monday, October 3. The DDA will also host a “welcome table” at registration on Friday, October 7, 11:00 - 5:00, at the Community House.
Questions? Contact Rebecca Shirley 706-482-2707

[Event Information](#)

The “Downtown Business Tips” newsletter is intended to provide merchants with monthly information about improving their business’s position in the market!

Please send your comments & suggestions to Rebecca Shirley.

Dahlonega Downtown Development Authority
“A Georgia Main Street Community”

Joel Cordle, Director
joelcordle@dahlongadda.org

Rebecca Shirley, Project Coordinator
rebeccashirley@dahlongadda.org
Phone: 706-864-6133

Use our website www.dahlongadda.org for business resources.



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