

Customer-centredness is routine

by Jim Danahy

Here is a recap of **10** proven routines, used by successful customer-centred retailers (several appeared in previous Customer Corner columns). Remember, consistency is everything!

WHAT WOULD CONNIE AND CONNOR SAY?

Give names to your customers (Connie and Connor Customer), then ask yourself this important question at every point of contact and before making decisions. The best managers and staff ask the question dozens of times each day.

KEEP TRACK OF WHAT'S WORKING

Before going home at the end of each shift, ask all staff, "What would Connie and Connor say about how we performed today?" Record their comments in a notebook every day.

- Collect customer letters and satisfaction stories in "legends and lore" scrapbooks.
- Review regularly.

HEY BOSS, SET THE TONE!

Managers must be seen to practice and live by customer-centeredness every day. Show staff how to act like hosts – treat customers as welcome guests.

SCHEDULE REGULAR CUSTOMER MEETINGS ("CONNIE AND CONNOR MEETINGS")

- Staff-only meetings that are all about customers and only about customers!
- Meet frequently – at least monthly and keep meetings short.
- Share examples of how staff pleased "Connie and Connor Customer" last week/month.
- Ask – "How can we do a better job of



pleasing Connie and Connor next week/month?"

- Be specific. Focus on the positive.
- Employees talk, bosses listen – Boss summarizes meeting and commitments.

GIVE EVERY STAFF MEMBER CONNIE & CONNOR "WALLET PHOTOS"

A simple hand-drawn stick picture of Connie and Connor customer, laminated. Ask staff to keep it in their wallets as a friendly reminder that, next to family and friends, Connie and Connor are the most important people in their lives.

ESTABLISH A CUSTOMER ADVISORY PANEL

Stay in tune with local community needs and special interests; enhance store visibility. Invite representatives from ethnic and local interest groups as well as kids and seniors. Set fixed terms, meet at least quarterly and renew the panel annually.

REWARD CUSTOMER-CENTRED BEHAVIOUR

Praise customer-centred staff behaviour without delay. Establish monthly and annual recognition and modest rewards and recognition for consistent performers.

CRITIQUE STAFF CONSTRUCTIVELY

Address inappropriate staff behaviour with the question "What would Connie or

Connor say about that?" In the vast majority of cases, employees take responsibility and commit to corrective action...no reprimands required!

USE THE HEAD HEART FOOT

CHECKLIST to ensure everything you do satisfies your customer on three critical levels of motivation:

- **Head** – *Are you offering tangible benefits?* "Head" messages are the primary reasons people come to your store. Invite special requests, try new ideas and constantly ask customers for feedback.
- **Heart** – *Are you and your staff showing sincere care?* "Heart" messages bring customers back to your store...and keep them coming. The magic is ensuring that every staff member shows care to every customer, every time. Care is the key to your reputation...and it costs you nothing!
- **Foot** – *Are you inviting the customer to take action?* "Foot" messages ring the cash register. They "ask for the order" or prompt customer response. Use caution. "Foot" messages are often costly and are quickly copied by competitors.

REMIND! REMIND! REMIND!

Create a customer-centred work environment with posters in your back room, staff washrooms and at all staff meetings. **YCM**

FREE POSTER OFFER!

Contact CustomerLAB for more information on how you can get your Connie and Connor Customer dos and don'ts poster.

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