

• 7 •

Bear with Me

Some people think that bears hoard honey before they hibernate for the winter. In reality, they usually purchase it, much like humans do. And for as long as anyone can remember, a small shop run by Adam—a grizzly—provided for the needs of everyone in the local forest.

Before winter descended, it was pretty much the same ritual every year. Bears would line up outside Adam's store with whatever goodies they had hunted or scavenged. As they came to the head of the line, they would point to whatever honey they wanted, growl, and Adam would arch his furry eyebrows and growl back. A trade was quickly negotiated, and the honey was then heaved with a sturdy forepaw in the direction of the purchaser.

One by one, they dropped off their treasures—fat squirrels, fresh salmon, ripe berries and nuts—in return for a winter's supply of their favorite sweet treat. But then one gaunt, aging bear finally reached the head of the line with something else entirely—a book.

Adam was not amused. Books were occasionally interesting, but they weren't very tasty. He growled with annoyance as he pointed to a pile of fresh meat and another of succulent fruit. The elderly bear shook

..... *Bear with Me*

his head dejectedly and pointed at the book. He was clearly too old to hunt or forage anymore, and this book was all he had to offer. They kept staring at each other until finally, in frustration, Adam swiped the book with his paw and hurled the smallest jar of honey he had at the old bear, who caught it gingerly and shuffled out of the store.

After the shop had closed down for the night, Adam growled to himself as he picked up the book. Pushing his reading glasses farther back on his snout, he opened to the first chapter: “How to Greet Your Customers.” Glancing quickly through the chapter, he nodded silently as he ran his right paw along the pages, before turning out the light and going to bed.

Still not entirely convinced, Adam decided to try an experiment the next morning. Instead of growling back, he said a hearty “Good morning!” to each bear who came into his shop. By the end of that week, he observed something interesting—the lines were noticeably longer.

The next week, he read Chapter 2: “How to Personalize Your Service.” The next day at the shop, he started using everyone’s name—and again, by the end of the week, the lines were longer still. Now quickly going through the other chapters, he began making other changes to his style: thanking people, learning what kinds of honey they liked best, and even getting to know the names of their cubs.

By the time he finished the book, the lines at his store had doubled in length! And something else interesting was happening as well: The other bears weren’t growling anymore, and they were now bringing even more goodies in exchange for his honey.

One day a couple of weeks later, as winter drew near, the elderly bear who gave Adam the book was shuffling past his store on his way back from the senior center. As he passed by the doorway, he felt a firm paw clasp him on the back and drag him inside. Moments later, he emerged with a dazed look on his face, dragging a ten gallon case

Good Service Is All in the Mechanics

of honey, as Adam's voice trailed behind him. "Good to see you again, sir, and have a nice day!"

Moral: *Good Service Is All in the Mechanics*

There is a saying that you catch more flies with honey than vinegar. In this story, as in real life, you can get more of this honey in the first place by paying attention to what you say to people.

The mechanics of good customer relations go far beyond being polite and friendly to other people. There is an art and a science to how we interact with people, with roots dating back to the fundamentals of behavioral psychology. How we greet people, what we say to start and build customer relationships, and how we handle problems depend on using the right techniques every bit as much as they depend on your attitude.

There is no lack of good information out there on the mechanics of good service. Learn from it, change the fundamentals of what you say, and the relationship between you and your customers will change dramatically and permanently.

Discussion Questions

- * How do you greet customers in your workplace? Do you call them by name?
- * How well do you get to know your customers and their likes and dislikes?
- * How do you thank people for their business?