

## Ways to Leap Ahead of the Competition

### **Sell The Sizzle!**

Are you selling the dream? Are you selling the fun, the relaxation, the nightlife, the pampering, the destinations and meeting new people? Don't sell the steak; sell the mouth-watering flavor!

### **In My Expert Opinion**

Meet with your leisure agents and have each pick a favorite destination from the top five major destinations. Together create a 90-day plan to make them the "Destination Expert" on that specific destination. Market their expertise through window displays, media, email, Newsletters and on AgentNet.

### **Dead Air, Is Anybody There?**

Have you ever been placed on hold and wonder if you've been disconnected? Why not use hold time as an opportunity to "sell" your leisure and cruise destinations?

### **Smile**

A smile tells the customers they came to the right place. Keep in mind a smile originates in two places, the mouth and eyes. A lips-only version looks pasted on, insincere. It doesn't fool anyone. The eyes, however, are the window to the soul and tell the truth about your feelings toward people. So smile with your eyes and mouth!

### **Make 'em Feel Special**

Customers like to feel important. You can enhance that by:

- Calling them by name
- Listening to their needs, wants and criticisms
- Learning their preferences and responding to them
- Getting to know them as people (know something about their family, profession, etc.)
- Complimenting and reassuring them
- Keeping in touch
- Taking customers pictures. Place these pictures on a wall that says "We Love Our Customers!"

### **Train for Gain**

Employee training quickly yields increased sales. It's also a necessity since front line employees are the first "touch" your customers receive.

Set aside 10 minutes daily for employee training. Talk about customer service, agency policy and procedures, new products, etc.

A skilled employee is worth their weight in gold!

### **Pencil Us In**

Offer your professional services to churches, associations, etc., to speak at meetings about destinations and travel related subjects. Ask your corporate accounts if they have social events for their employees or retirees and offer to speak at their meetings.

### **Use Hoopla and Fun**

Customers enjoy visiting a place of business that provides a fun and happy environment. (So do the people who work there) Have theme Fridays. Wear clothing that reflects the theme. Hula Skirt anyone? Offer your customers small giveaways or refreshments that reflect the theme.

### **Would you like Fries with your Shake?**

Don't forget to up sell. Suggesting an additional service to your client is not being "pushy". Some people may thank you for the suggestion to arrive a day ahead of their cruise. Remember, some may not know they can do this. By suggesting other options you show you know your product and care about the client!

### **Clean for Green**

- Take a long, hard look at your office. Do you have a customer friendly environment?
- Loose the racks of brochures, the dead plants, the faded posters.
- Banish hand-written signs
- Keep your desks tidy. A messy desk doesn't show a customer you are busy; it shows them you're unorganized!
- Clean, fix furniture
- Wash light fixtures
- Control odors. Do you have a kitchen in the office? Think about the smells that come from that kitchen.
- Have a super finicky, clean freak provide an honest evaluation of your office!

People buy where they feel comfortable and they return when they feel appreciated! Remember, 50% of a customers buying decision depends on their first impression. Make it a winner!

### **Outconvenience Your Competition**

Time has become a precious commodity in this hustle, bustle world. Out of sheer necessity people patronize businesses that are easy to deal with.

- Hours of operation. Are you open or accessible when prospects and customers can conduct business?
- Pay Policies; do you accept all major credit cards? What about personal checks? Do you offer financing?
- Telephone? How is it answered? Do you have an after hours service, voice mail, emergency number?
- Accessibility? Is your location well signed? Parking adequate? Do you provide clear directions in any sales literature?

### **First Session for Free**

You need to charge service fees, but for those "first timers" offer a free session. The first contact is crucial. After the first session don't just let your customer walk away. Ask them what they thought of your service, and provide a questionnaire so they can grade your service in writing. If their first impression was positive you can justify your service fee. If it is negative you should revisit your customer service skills. Would you want to pay a fee for poor service?

### **Call Attention to your Store**

If you have a storefront window use it to your best advantage! Moving displays, neon signs, out of season decorations (e.g. Christmas in July) and creative displays will turn a head. Forget the old, dusty, outdated displays. BORING!!!

### **Always Call them the next Day**

Call your customer the day after you close a sale to thank them again and ask if they may have thought of any unanswered questions.

You will create a raving fan!

### **Complaints are a Gift**

Don't think of complaints as an ugly monster. Complaints provide useful feedback as to how and where you can improve your business. Create a "complaint friendly" office. Post a sign that states you appreciate any comments that can help improve your business.

When a customer complains THANK them for letting you know about the problem. Remember that 50% of the customers who experience poor service do not complain. They are also the ones who do not return to your store.

Follow up with every customer by phone or comment card!

### **Business Cards That Are Worth Money**

People won't throw away business cards that are worth something. Useful information printed on the back may help, but the real keeper is one that is worth money. How about a set of cards for first time customers with a discount toward their first booking?

### **Who in Heck?**

Your prospects receive zillions of business offers in the mail to which they pay little or no attention. But what if one was a small candy box with a message stating, "Just wanted to sweeten your day!"

A New York entrepreneur cut regular 10-inch envelopes in half and sent one side (glued) to prospects. He received a 30% return on this mailing.

### **Testimonials**

Encourage your "happy camper customers" to write a short testimonial or thank you about your service and post them in a conspicuous place in the office!

### **Customer Referrals**

Set up a customer referral program for your current clients. With every person they refer that books a vacation with you, offer a discount or spiff to both the referee and the referral. Remember, word of mouth costs nothing and a happy client will spread the word.

### **Volunteer**

Get involved with your community. Become a volunteer or member of a local organization. Not only does your agency get good PR, but also you get a sense of well being for helping your fellow

neighbor and, you get your name out into the community in a positive way. Get your agents involved and make it a staff project!

**Think Positive! You can create the positive attitude for your employees!**