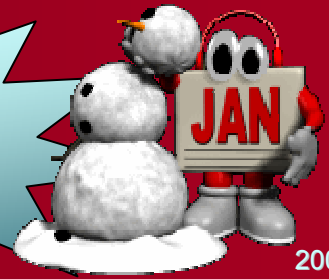




This month:

**NO FRILLS
"SERVICE"**



2006

January 12, 2006 Issue 1, Volume 3

These days, we're all trying to work smarter and control expenses. Many organizations are restructuring their product lines, departments, territories and staff to be more efficient and cost effective. Many managers are taking on larger and larger territories and their time is being spread thinner and thinner. The front line customer service staff members are dealing with heavier workloads while simultaneously trying to implement changes that impact the customer. With less managerial face time, a heavier workload and possible customer resistance, their patience can be tested. Delivering exceptional customer service can be a difficult job at the best of times, but these days, in the wake of "no-frills" offers, it may be hard to remember that customers still expect a certain level of respect and responsiveness. If this sounds like your company, we urge you to take time this month to reinforce the importance of the customer experience.

how well do you distinguish your company from the others?



"Profit in business comes from repeat customers, customers who boast about your product or service, and who brings friends with them."

- W. Edwards Deming

The Banff Centre, a globally respected arts, cultural, and educational institution and conference facility, has recently published a new article by TriOpus Group's David Colman called, *"Change – A Leader's Challenge."* To read this and other article's on their Leadership Development Online Library, visit:

www.banffcentre.ca/departments/leadership/library/

there is less to fear from outside competition than from inside inefficiency, discourtesy and bad service.

- anonymous

www.triopusgroup.com

By now, you will have heard or experienced the fact that North America's major airlines are now no-frills all the way. The airlines would tell you that their customers demand the lowest possible price. Therefore, if you want something other than a seat on your next flight, you are probably going to have to pay for it. Air Canada, for example, is now charging two dollars for a pillow – I have it on good authority that the pillows are very nice – and United is now charging between twenty-five and ninety-five dollars for the privilege of sitting in their emergency row. Ouch!

At the same time I wonder if the Customer Care on airlines is going through the same no-frills experience. My bias is that it is not but I want to share an experience.

A short time ago, I flew from Houston to Calgary with a friend who was also flying on to another city. Here is the complete unabridged discussion I had with the agent:

"Passports," the agent said. I handed them over and loaded our bags onto the scales.

"*How many bags?*" the agent asked. "*Three,*" I said. "*But,*" I added, "*they are going to two different places.*"

"*You should have told me,*" the agent snapped.

"*You should have asked,*" I suggested.

And then came the most incredible answer I have ever heard. "*We don't always have time to ask where people are going.*"

As someone who does a lot of talking, I was lost for words. After the agent tagged the bags and gave back the passports, I had one last question.

"*Do you have a lounge at this airport?*"

"*No.*"

Now you'll probably notice, as I did, that there was no hint of "*Welcome back*", or "*Thanks for flying with us again*", or even, "Hello" in our discussion.

I must be honest and say that experiences like that with the airline have been extremely rare. But the lesson for all of us when dealing with our internal or external clients is that our companies are only as good as our weakest employee. Had that been my only experience with the airline, I probably would not deal with them again, given a choice.

Whether we like it or not, in our business or personal lives, we are communicating all the time. We communicate through what we say, the tone we use, our eyes, the way we dress, the way we stand and walk, and whether or not we smile.

As customers, I think we can come to terms with having to pay for 'value-added' services. But a smile, a welcome, respect, and good manners are not negotiable and are, or should be, included in the price – whatever the price.

