

## **Attention to Detail—The key to business success**

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One of the most vexing questions that many business owners have in today's world of challenging economic times is "How do I do better?" "How do I get more business—and keep it returning?" The answers to these questions are not as complicated or challenging as they might first appear. The real answer to these questions is robust Attention to Detail in all facets of the business operation.

Attention to Detail (ATD) takes many forms and functions. In most conventional everyday cases, ATD means paying attention to ALL of the factors that impact your business and its many operational facets. Let's explore some of these factors.

1. **Returning telephone calls.** How many times have you either taken a phone call, gotten a message or email that says call XXXX and then you promptly forgot to return the call in a prompt and timely manner? This happens more than one might imagine. If someone calls and you need to return the call—do it at the first opportunity that you have to do so. Returning the call in a timely fashion is important for several reasons. One, it shows that you have a genuine interest in the need/requirements of your customer. You value his/her business and want to be a part of the problem solution as rapidly as possible. Two, rapid return of phone calls show the value that you place on the customer and his/her relationship with your firm. Three, people who need help or information that you can provide want some assurance that you are interested in their challenges and have possible problem solutions which may apply to the matter at hand.
2. **Proof reading emails and paper copies.** I continue to be amazed at how many errors are contained within emails, bills and letters that I receive. I just received an invoice today from a caterer that we used last week. Everything was right except the address and time of the event. What was listed on the invoice was the address of where I used the caterer at the last function. Now, I know what happened—they used the last invoice as a template for today's invoice, not checking to see if all of the data contained therein was correct and accurate. This is a simple error that many folks, including me, make occasionally. Was any harm done? The answer is no, however, this seemingly little "glitch" fails to reflect positively on the sender. First impressions are lasting impressions—your mother probably used to say that when you were in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. It is still just as pertinent and germane today as it was many years ago!
3. **Neat facilities, shops, offices.** Take a good look at your store, office, warehouse, work area. Does it look neat, clean, well organized, and professional in appearance? If your answer is NO, what do you think that your customer/client thinks? I recall an old saying, "Neatness is next to Godliness". Dusts, dirt, unrepaired walls, facilities in need of a can of paint are all detractors from both the customer as well as the worker perspective. People like to shop and work in facilities that are neat, clean, well organized, bright and cheery. If your facilities are not that way, that perhaps, is a partial answer to why you are not attracting the volume and quantity of clients/customers that you think that you deserve. I toured a Bean processing plant last week. Although the processing plant was dusty, the floors were relatively clean, the facilities well organized and the office was spotless. The plant manifested solid evidence of the pride of the workers and the management team. Your facilities should do the same.
4. **Employees who smoke.** If you have employees who smoke, they should smoke outside, NOT in view of customers/clients. I HATE to go to a store and see 3-4 employees on the front porch, parking lot or outside the door smoking. If employees have to smoke, they should be required to smoke out of sight of the customers/clients. Some customers/clients find smoking offensive. There is no reason to alienate a current or prospective customer with employees who smoke. Smokers should be outdoors and away from the facility, hidden from any customers/clients when smoking.
5. **Shelf product labeling.** It is important that all of your shelves have clear, accurate and easy to read labels on them. Each customer/client should easily be able to see what is on the shelf, what the size of the product is and how much it costs. If your labeling equipment allows you to list the price per size, ounce, pound, weight, that metric should also be listed. Some Big Box stores do a good job of this—others, you don't know how much something costs until you get to the check out register.
6. **Employee Appearance.** Do your employees look sharp, professional? Are their clothes/uniforms clean, in good repair and reflect positively on you and your business? Does each employee have a nametag that is easily visible by

the customer? The key here is LOOK SHARP, FEEL SHARP, and BE SHARP. If your employees project a positive, professional image, then customers/clients are normally more willing to shop at your place of business. Employees who look slovenly, unkempt and unprofessional can "run" customers to your competition down the street.

7. **Greeting a customer when he/she walks in.** For many people, this is a key to a positive relationship with their vendor. Everyone likes to hear his/her name called. This is true for both employees as well as customers. The Window Clerks at the post office that I use know me by my first name. They greet everyone with a sense of pride and honor about the job they do for the Post Office. Yes, there are closer Post Offices to my home; however, I have developed a relationship with this particular Post Office. I WANT to go there and use them. This should be the same for your business—you want customers/clients to drive past the competition to come to your place of business. When someone comes to your business, he/she normally has a problem that he/she hopes that you can help fix. The problem may be a new part, piece or advice in how to resolve the problem. This is a real key to attention to detail—knowing and greeting your customers is key to your success.

We have discussed how Attention to Detail (ATD) is the key to making your business stand out, allowing more customers to shop your firm instead of the competition. Although these are all simple concepts, look around and see if you really embrace and operationalize them each and every day. If not, strongly consider using all of these principles in order to generate more business for your firm.

If you need help, call Solomon Bruce Consulting LLC at 406-672-6387. We can help you enhance your attention to Detail!