

Different Frame – Different Customer Experience

By: Bob Burg

If our customers are the lifeblood of our business then doesn't it make sense to communicate in a way that helps them to feel good both about themselves and about us?

Yet, how often do we experience the opposite?

The following took place while out of town. I decided to visit a local health club; a very nice gym.

About ten minutes into the treadmill workout, an announcement came over the loudspeaker. The message had a somewhat, no, actually, it had a very condescending tone. The words weren't much better:

"Members, please show common courtesy by not staying on the cardio machines for more than 30-minutes at a time when there are people waiting. It's very rude to keep other members waiting."

Now, it was obvious to my observing eyes and ears that this immediately rankled many of those in the gym; not the least of those being the ones presently working out on the cardio machines.

A Quick Dissection

1. Did the club employee who made the announcement have a valid point? Sure, the 30-minute time limit is very practical and, according to others, well-accepted by all. If some people were not honoring that, it needed to be addressed. A public announcement would, in fact, be quite appropriate in this case as a good reminder.
2. However, at the time of the announcement, the cardio machines were only at about 50 percent capacity, which made the members a bit curious regarding the timing. Judging by the sarcastic laughter and shaking of heads, a bit perturbed by such, as well.
3. Both the tone and the wording of the announcement were very negative and insulting, as though being addressed were a bunch of irresponsible children; not paying members who support the operation of the facility with their consumer dollars (and had choices of other health clubs they could patronize).

Instead, how about something like...

"Good morning. As always, we're glad to have you with us, and it's inspiring to see you working out so hard. Congratulations on your effort. An important point to bring up in order that all of you are assured an excellent (Name of Facility) workout experience; during those times when the cardio machines are at capacity, please be sure and not stay for more than 30 minutes. This will ensure that none of you will ever have to wait too long and you can get your workout in at your convenience. Thank you for your attention, and for being a member of (Name of Facility). Have a great workout!"

This was a totally different frame. Not only in terms of respect but in how the rule benefits the members themselves. This dramatically increases the odds the message will not only be appreciated, but adhered to.

In both messages, the same intent, mostly likely many different results. Frame to honor the customer, not insult them.