

This is an extract from the book '3 Dimensional Care' by  
Derek Williams.

For more information on the book please visit  
<http://www.thewowawards.com/> to order, or to read  
stories about companies offering inspiring customer  
service.

### **Rule Number 3 – The Off Switch**

If there were something you could do that would make a very small improvement in your life, would you do it?

Assuming that it was going to cost you nothing and take absolutely no time, wouldn't it be worth doing no matter how small the improvement?

Picture the scene. You see a shop selling all sorts of things that are of interest to you. You go in to have a look around. Maybe you can't afford most of the things that are on sale but you rather hope that there may be a little something you could buy.

You start quietly browsing and then it happens. The shopkeeper comes across and with an eager smile says, "Can I help you?"

Now we've all been in this situation. What do you know you are most likely to say? Something along the lines of "No thanks. I'm just looking".

Our brains are funny old things. Once we tell a person something we do feel rather compelled to stand by what we've said. And so, even though you may have wanted to buy something small, you told the shopkeeper that you are just looking. The chances that you will actually buy anything now are considerably reduced. In fact, you may well cut short your browsing and leave quicker than you intended.

Those four little words, "Can I help you?" are just like pushing a switch. They stop the customer being in buying mode and commit him to browsing mode.

If we know how we are affected by those four words, why on earth would we ever use them with a customer of our own? Could it be that we are a little afraid of communicating with the customer. Maybe we say this knowing that it sounds polite even though it is putting up a barrier to doing business. After all, your boss really couldn't criticise you for saying, "Can I help you", could he??? Only if he knows the truth about The Off Switch.

### **Rule Number 4 – The Psychology of the 2<sup>nd</sup> impression**

**This one is so simple and yet so effective.**

Once you've done a great job with the first impression, cement it.

Work on creating lots of little follow up impressions.

There are 2 reasons for doing this.

1. The thing that you did first might just get missed.  
For example, we put a little sign up in our office to welcome our visitors for that day. It's a simple message followed by the time of the visit and the names of our guests. It really does create a great impression with those people that see it. But sometimes people just don't see it. So we have a bundle of other little things that we do to make certain that we create the right impression.
2. When you have a whole succession of little things all pointing in the same direction, the total effect is greater than the sum of the parts.

If someone notices the sign, they probably smile and feel that it shows a degree of care. When we take their coat and hang it on a decent hanger "So that it keeps its shape," the initial impression is strengthened.

If the meeting room is tidy, comfortable, nicely lit and with some fresh flowers on the table they feel even better.

When they are greeted by people with a warm smile and a helpful attitude the relationship is cemented.

I've had occasions when people have come in, looked around and sat down. Before we've even started talking about their business they've said, "I've already made my mind up. I want to deal with your firm".

### **Rule Number 5 – People Deal With People...**

Two questions for you:-

Which bank do you use?

Why do you use that bank?

Now I have no way of knowing exactly how you answered this question. But let me tell you some of the answers that I most often hear:-

"The manager there really understands my business."

### 3-Dimensional Care

“They helped me when I was in difficulty.”

“They are always so friendly. And they remember my name.”

“A friend of mine is the manager there.”

“They really seem to care.”

You see, when we really get down to it, the name of the bank doesn't come into it. The answers nearly always revolve around the people involved. How they treat you. How much they care. How much they know about you.

So when we choose to use a particular bank it's rarely because of the products or the history. “Established since 1823” just doesn't set our pulse racing.

It's the people. We choose to deal with people.

How much time do you spend focused on products and price? How much time do you spend focused on people?

**Rule Number 6 – Take Responsibility**



TOLLWELL ROAD · LEICESTER · ENGLAND · LE4 1BR  
TEL: 0990 340404 · FAX: 0116 236 4042

25 January 1999

Your Account No. 283022

Fiona Black  
Stephens & Co  
The Bridgegate Busns Ctr  
Martinfield  
Welwyn Garden City Herts  
AL7 1JG

Dear Fiona Black:

Thank you for your recent order.

Did you know that your company's first order with Viking was on 3 August 1992?

This note from me is just to let you know how much each of us at Viking really appreciates your business. I know you have many choices for your office supplies - but no one tries harder than we do to ensure you save money and get quick, friendly service from everyone here. We even deliver free on orders of £30\* or more!

Please accept my personal thanks. Anytime I can be of help to you, just let me know.

Yours sincerely,



KEITH CAIN  
Managing Director

\*(see your catalogue for details).

**This letter from Keith Cain, Managing Director of Viking Direct, has a wonderful personal touch. It really makes you feel that you are dealing with an individual and not just a company.**

### 3-Dimensional Care

Try this exercise. Pick a business that you have never been to before and pay them a visit.

Take a pad and pen and describe every aspect of your visit:-

- How easy was it to get an appointment?
- How easy was it to find the building?
- Where did you park your car?
- What were your first impressions?
- Were you expected?
- How were you received?
- What things made you feel really good about the visit?
- What things did you really dislike?
- If you were the Managing Director of that business, how could you make a customer's experience better?

Now try this. Describe how your customers would answer these same questions if they were visiting your business for the first time.

For most people, this is a tough task.

How often do you really look at things from the customer's point of view? How often do you really ask customers what they think.

Everyday we go into our place of work. We think that we know it intimately. Every part of the reception, our office, the factory floor.

Try another exercise. Get someone who doesn't work in your business to go round with a camera. Give them a roll of film that will take just twelve pictures. Ask them to photograph the 12 things that they notice most in your business.

I know how I reacted when one of my Team did this in my office. I couldn't believe that I was looking at photographs of our offices. There was mess all over the place. Boxes stacked haphazardly. Health and safety hazards galore. And I thought that we were doing a great job of creating good first impressions. (The word Team is special in our business and that's why I spell it with a capital T. I'll explain more later.)

I heard a lovely story recently about an accountancy practice. When a customer was asked what he really disliked about dealing with this business he said, "When I face my accountant, he has a window behind him. No matter how hard I try, I just can't stop looking at all the bird droppings on the window."

It's a classic example of how customers notice the little things that we don't. And I can almost hear the accountant's reply. It probably went along the lines of "But it doesn't affect the quality of my work." Or maybe, "It's not my job to clean the windows."

### 3-Dimensional Care

Has he missed the point? Is he thinking only about the technical work of his business and ignoring the customer's feelings?

Let's just remind ourselves why anyone would go to an accountant. We go to an accountant to get the professional help that we need to help us achieve our objectives. What this means is that most of us don't understand the technical work of the accountant. That's why we went to him in the first place!

So, if we don't understand the technical work of an accountant, what will we judge him on? Will it be how he balances the accounts to 2 places of decimals? Will it be his knowledge of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act section 381? Will it be that his firm was established in 1836?

No!

We judge this person by the bird shit on his window!

So the rule is "take responsibility".

The approach to your place of work and everything associated with it reflects on you.

If you are a shopkeeper, sweep the pavement.

If you run a store on a retail park, clean up the car park.

If you don't care about the detail in the car park, maybe your employees will feel it's okay to ship the goods a day late. The way that you are reflects throughout your business. And the state of your business reflects you.