

THE IN-STORE ADVANTAGE



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"Do something wonderful. People may imitate it." » Albert Schweitzer

P-Trap Philosopher

A recent conversation with a plumber working in an airport left me smiling and reflecting on work satisfaction.

It was early in the morning, and though I wasn't in a bad mood, my spirits weren't as high as those of the guy lying on the restroom floor.

But truth be told, if I ever must lie on my back in an airport restroom, I'd prefer it to be in the early morning, when the air still has the scent of whatever that chemically clean smell is from mop buckets.

As I walked in, I had to step around the legs protruding from under the sinks.

He apologized for being in the way and I told him, "No my friend, I think I'm in your way. Do you need me to hand you a P-trap or something?"

He started to detail the project he was working on, and I was tempted to interrupt him to admit that my plumbing knowledge pretty much peaked when I knew the name of the curvy pipe.

However, just as I did in my earliest days as a branch manager among seasoned veterans, I smiled, nodded, and pretended to follow

Good Girl, Ginger!

A conversation last week about the practice of addressing customers by name had me reflecting on a great cartoon from 30+ years ago.

Sure, I might struggle to remember the news I read this morning.

But a cartoon from decades ago? No problem.

My college roommate had a golden retriever named, "Ginger."

The fact we had no issue having a dog of that size living with us in a mobile home was a testament to her disposition (and ours, I suppose.)

The cartoon that made us laugh was "The Far Side" by Gary Larson.

In one frame, a person is scolding his dog.

The caption reads, "What We Say To Dogs," and the character says, "Okay, Ginger! I've had it! You stay out of the garbage! Understand, Ginger? Stay out of the garbage or else!"

The next frame reads, "What Dogs Hear," with the character saying, "blah blah Ginger! blah blah blah Ginger! blah blah blah blah!"

along. Turns out, he was actually a good instructor.

After a while, I told him how astonishing it is that many of us go through life seemingly believing that things work by magic.

We just expect everything to function without giving much thought to the reality that it requires good people to keep things running.

That seemed to strike a nerve with him and he said, "I appreciate that. You have to remind yourself sometimes that what you are doing makes a difference, and that not everybody can do your job."

After wishing him a great day and leaving, I reflected on what he said.

Back in the Mesozoic era when I ran an in-store branch, I used to tell my team something similar.

They were sometimes frustrated that they had far more responsibilities and tougher work environments than their peers in other branches.

I'd remind them that I could take any of them and plug them in just about anywhere at another branch and they wouldn't miss a beat.

But there was no way I could grab just anyone there and think they could do their jobs today.

My mantra was, "You can do their jobs, they can't do yours."

Regardless of your position, take pride in excelling at a job that not just anyone can do well.

Remind yourself of this, especially during long days and in the face of rejection.

Even more importantly, remember to acknowledge and thank your team.

Recognizing the effort it takes to do jobs not everyone can handle is a powerful motivator.

That became a running joke around our place.

We also laughed about how that plays out with we humans.

You're not really paying attention to what's being said in class, at work, or out in public until, out of the blue, someone says your name.

That's when you snap out of your daydream and do your best to act like you were listening.

Jokes aside, there are few things as simple yet effective at capturing someone's attention, personalizing an interaction, and conveying respect as using a person's name—be they a customer or a potential customer.

I doubt there is a sales or service training program around today that doesn't (rightly) encourage addressing a customer by name.

Yet, notice how frequently you interact with a service provider who, in one way or another, has access to your name but never utilizes it.

Studies across various fields, from retailing to cognitive psychology, have demonstrated the positive effects of hearing one's name.

These benefits range from an increased likelihood of making a purchase to brand loyalty to an improved ability to recall an interaction.

People naturally gravitate towards those who make them feel seen.

Simply calling a customer by their name is one of the most direct ways to achieve this.

In a world that often feels increasingly isolated and impersonal, the simple gesture of using their names conveys respect and helps make customers feel personally valued.

How many folks will you make feel valued today?

"Seek to do good, and you will find that happiness will run after you." »
James Freeman Clarke

Dave Martin, author of The In-Store Advantage, has become one of the most prolific writers in the banking industry. His keynote presentations, seminars, and podcasts have an authenticity and humor that brings teams of all sizes and seniority levels together.

For more info about having Dave or an FSI Consultant speak to your group, email Tina Coleman, tcoleman@SupermarketBank.com or call 800-992-4978.



Financial Supermarkets, Inc. • fsi@supermarketbank.com

383 Clarkesville Street • PO Box 1450 • Cornelia, GA 30531 • (800) 992-4978

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