

Successfully Fulfilling the Unexpressed Wishes of Guests by Alison Howland Published in Les Nouvelles Esthetique and Spa January 2012

Did you know that you could boost your spa's profits by 225%?

According to Bain & Company, businesses can boost profits by as much as 255% by retaining merely 5% more of their existing clients.¹

In this challenging economy, who doesn't want to boost profits? Yet the elusive question remains: ***How do I retain that optimum number of 5% of my clients?***

The answer: consistently deliver outstanding customer service.

Did you know:

- 68% of customer defection takes place because customers feel poorly treated (International Customer Service Assoc.)
- It can cost 6-7 times more to gain new customers than retain existing ones (Bain & Co)
- For every customer that bothers to complain, 26 remain silent (Lee Resource, Inc.)

Spa customers are more savvy than ever--they want what they want, when they want it and completely customized the way they like it. If your spa isn't making them feel valued, they will most certainly go to a competitor.

The Quality Experience

Total Quality Management, or TQM, is an integrated organizational effort designed to improve quality at every level--in other words, the entire organization: from Front Desk to Attendants to Spa Therapists to Leadership. All working towards the same goal: making quality a priority by putting customer needs first.

With TQM, the first and overriding feature is to focus on clients: first identify then meet and exceed their needs. Clients needs and likes vary, it is imperative to continually gather data to stay in tune with your clients, to take that information and improve the client experience at all levels.

Frenchman's Creek Country Club in Palm Beach Gardens Florida, holds the standard to which area country clubs aspire by embodying a total high-service quality experience in every aspect of the club--from the valet knowing member's names to the spa therapist knowing the time a member likes to schedule their treatment. Tiffany Desouza, Fitness and Spa Director says, "our core philosophy is to truly KNOW our members---know their needs, likes and dislikes. And in order to know our members, we are in constant communication with them. Our goal is to make each member feel special every time they experience our

¹ Bain & Company is a global management consulting firm whose business is making companies more valuable.

spa. We have created flexible protocols to allow for customization of the spa experience. And since we have a membership with constant return visits, it's key that we consistently deliver that same high level customized experience every time."

Legendary Service

Ken Blanchard, author/co-author of over 30 best-selling business books, including *The One Minute Manager* and *Creating Raving Fans*, says: "If you really want to 'own' a customer, if you want a booming business, you have to go beyond satisfied customers and create 'Raving Fans'. Having Raving Fans means that you have achieved the kind of service excellence that turns a customer into a lifetime customer. A raving fan is an advocate of your products or services in the marketplace."

Defined as consistently delivering the ideal service that keeps customers coming back and creating a competitive advantage, *Legendary Service* uses the concept of **I CARE** to teach an organization and its employees how essential the optimum service experience is.

Neroli Spa & Apothecary in Charlottesville, VA embodies this concept:

"It's important to not only anticipate, but to consistently go above and beyond a guest's expectations with the little details" says Suzanne Aiman-Owen, owner of Neroli Spa & Apothecary. "We live by the mantra WE CARE, and it is part of our culture to ensure that all our guests have those small personal experiences that create a perfect Neroli spa visit."

Creating that perfect spa visit can cost: organic tea, and special touches can all add up and effect the bottom line.

"It's all in the presentation" Aiman-Owen continues. "We spent years laboriously researching how to stay ahead of what we did for our guests and we learned that they want something new and exciting during their experience: something they can see, touch, feel and smell. We began with a signature tea service that once guests experience it, they want to buy it. This retail opportunity offsets the expense and creates a win/win for us and the guests"

Service Behind Closed Doors

For spa owners, the therapists working in your spa are the key emissaries of your business. These are the people who have the honor and privilege of working on clients on a personal level. Ensure that they are trained to deliver an optimum guest experience. Krista Kiley, owner of SkinRichment, a much sought-after international spa education company says "Intention is everything. Before I begin a treatment, I make sure that I am completely focused on my guest, it is important to be in a 'receiving' mode. I use breath work, I set my intent to allow energy to work through me and give the guest whatever they need from both my skills and the spa treatment."

"When the guest arrives," Kiley continues, "I conduct a consultation to learn as much as I can about their likes and expectations. It has been my experience that most guests don't really verbalize what they want and it is up to the therapist to observe and learn through unspoken communication--by observing the guest and using touch to learn what their skin and body

responds to. I have found that when do these three things: set the intention, conduct the consultation, and am focused, the result for the guest is optimum.”

What's in it for me?

In this time of economic challenges, it can be costly for spa owners to go above and beyond a guest's expectations. Kathy Jennings, owner of Bluesky Spaworks in Warwick, Rhode Island has found a way to ensure guests receive value and feel special. She started the Bluesky Spaworks Email Club. Guests elect to sign up and become members--4,000 at last count-- and are sent periodic email blasts on specials. “We decided that Living Social and Groupon weren't for us. When I see that we have several openings in one day, we send out a morning email blast to our subscribers and offer a discount on those services at those times. The guest gets a special perk, we get our openings booked.” And as if that isn't enough, Jennings also offers surprises to guests a' la Tony Hsieh of Zappos Delivering Happiness philosophy: “When guest's hair color is processing, we will surprise them with a complimentary nail polish color change. This always wins over clients as it goes above and beyond their expectations and lets them know we truly value them.”

Next Steps

The people who have been quoted in this article understand and embrace the mantra that ‘**C**lients **A**re **R**eally **E**verything”, they **CARE**. We have chosen to work in a high touch industry working very personally on clients. When we give our best to our clients, we, in turn will receive the best reward: a satisfied client.