

*According to Barbara Wold, International Speaker, Author and Business Strategist, **MAKE YOUR CUSTOMER FEEL SPECIAL!** Retailers and business owners hope that in tough times, people will long for the comfort of hometown shopping with people they know and trust.*

Customers like to feel important. Here are some things you can do to enhance that feeling and build sales:

- Call customers by name. If you don't know their name -- "We haven't see you in awhile, welcome back" -- let customers know you recognize them.
- Listen to their needs, wants, ideas and criticisms.
- Great timing for staff meetings and focus groups -- ask for "new" business building ideas and "new" services that can be offered.
- Remind employees to focus on the positive. Customers don't want to come in and hear doom and gloom -- they may not return.
- Many customers may plan to scale back -- offer more services to build on the perceived value.
- Learn customer's preferences and respond to them. Example: Asking, "Do you still prefer ?" This lets them know you remember and helps you fine tune your merchandise selection.
- Get to know your customers and potential customers as people. Learn something about their families, professions, interests, etc.
- Compliment and reassure customers on their purchases.
- Keep in touch with your customers via newsletters, email, phone calls, events and local paper advertisements. This is the time to clean-up and build your contact information database. Remember, monthly email Newsletters don't cost anything to send out. Make them informative, worth looking at, list your special events, added services, new merchandise, etc. Don't forget your complete contact information including area code for phone, address with city, state and zip code, website, etc.
- Get to know your local newspaper editor and help him work on a human interest story about you and your business -- far better than advertising and cheaper.
- Take customers' pictures. Example: A pet and supply store takes photos of customers with their pets and posts them on a bulletin board. What a great way to bring them into the "family of happy customers!"

In Short: Treat customers as guests you care about!

***"If you wait for opportunities to occur, you will be one of the crowd!"** Edward de Bono*