

5 ETIQUETTE TIPS TO SET YOUR SMALL BUSINESS APART FROM THE COMPETITION

By Rachel Wagner, October 2007

Competition in the small business arena is fierce. So, what can set your business apart from the others? Try using some good old fashioned business etiquette and friendliness. I am amazed at the number of businesses that don't use these simple courtesies—and impressed when they do.

Use these 5 easy tips to “outclass” your competition:

1. **Give a friendly greeting.** When a customer walks in, look up from your work, smile, and say “good morning,” “good afternoon,” or “hello.” If you know the customer by name, add their name to the greeting. Everyone likes to hear their own name and it creates a more personal business relationship.
2. **Shake hands often.** Greet the customer with a handshake, and shake again when you thank the customer at the end of the meeting or transaction. Always stand for a handshake, use good eye contact, and give two firm pumps.
3. **Walk around to the customer's side of the counter to present their purchase.** This gesture makes the customer feel valued and shows your consummate professionalism.
4. **Thank the customer for coming in**—even if they didn't make a purchase—and wish them a “great afternoon.”
5. **Show that you care.** Create a personal “customer log.” Keep brief notes on the customer's children's names and activities, pets' names, the customer's other interests such as golf or gardening, or major events in their life that you learn about during conversations. The next time you have contact with the customer, you can then ask about their son's wedding or if their pet is better. People like to do business with people who care about them and their family.

“Outclassing the competition” with courtesy, friendliness, and proper business etiquette helps you to cultivate better customer relationships—which can positively affect your bottom line.

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