

“Laurie will take you from Greet to Great.”

—JEFFREY GITOMER

AUTHOR OF *The Little Gold Book of YES! Attitude*

THE  
**greet your  
customer  
manual**

**YOUR COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO**  
Welcoming & Retaining  
Clients, Patients, Members,  
Guests, Buyers...  
In Person, On the Phone  
& Online



WRITTEN & COMPILED BY

*Laurie Brown*

FOREWORD BY Tony Hsieh, CEO, Zappos

# INTRODUCTION

“I walked out, and  
I will **never** go back again.”

NICK ENTERED A DEPARTMENT STORE looking for a new suit and had an experience you may recognize. As he walked through the store, he was ignored—totally and completely. It wasn't that the staff wasn't available or even that they were busy with other customers. No, they were all standing there, either talking to one another or doing nothing. No one acknowledged Nick. No one said hello. No one offered him any help. Sure, Nick could have approached one of these idle staff members and asked for help. But that was not what he did. Nick simply turned around, exited, and walked across the mall to the store's major competitor. There the staff welcomed him. He felt like an important guest—and he proceeded to buy hundreds of dollars worth of merchandise.

Later that night, when Nick went out for a drink with his buddies, he told them about his treatment in the first store. “I walked out,” he said, “and I will never go back again.” His friends all nodded.

## *The GREET YOUR CUSTOMER MANUAL*

As I am sure you know, this is not an isolated story. People turn around and walk out of stores, offices, lobbies, and restaurants every single day. They don't complain to the manager. They don't make a fuss. They don't let anyone in the establishment know they were unhappy with the service. They save their grouching for their friends. And their friends pay attention.

Recently I conducted a poll on the Internet. I asked, "Have you ever stopped doing business with a company because of how you were greeted, either in person or over the phone?"

Two hundred people responded. Here are the results:

77.9% answered "Yes"

14.7% answered "No"

7.4% were unsure

Before you begin to consider the repercussions of an unwelcoming or nonexistent greeting, put aside your role as a business owner or staff member and recall your experiences as a customer. Have you ever felt that the way you were greeted—or not greeted—affected your feelings about that business? More importantly, think about how it affected your behavior.

You know that greeting your customer is not insignificant. When a customer first approaches you, no matter what your job, you are the face of the business. Your greeting has a powerful impact on your customer's experience and impression of your

## *The GREET YOUR CUSTOMER MANUAL*

establishment. At your best, you are a gracious host. At your worst, your actions could mean the beginning of the end of that customer's patronage.

People now have an infinite number of choices about where to do business. More than ever, it is essential that you begin your relationship with your customer with a sincere, welcoming greeting in hopes of keeping that customer for life.

All too often, we lose our customers within the first five minutes. And we have absolutely no clue that we've lost them. Like Nick, they just leave, and they never return.

Even worse than that, customers like to tell their friends and family about their service experiences—especially their bad ones. They may casually comment to a few people about the good greeting they've received, but they love to shout about bad service.

So, if you think, "Oh, it's only one customer, no big deal," think again. Once customers start telling everyone about the lousy reception they received, the consequences can be exponential. A particularly bad story gets repeated from friend to friend. What's more, consider the impact of blogs. If a disgruntled customer decides to write about you, what might have been an isolated story can turn into a nightmare. The echo of that experience has the potential to cost you far more customers than you would

## *The GREET YOUR CUSTOMER MANUAL*

ever have lost through traditional word of mouth.

An effective greeting will make your customers feel welcome and valued; and, ultimately, your customers are the source of your income. Author and management consultant Peter Drucker wrote that the purpose of business is to create and keep a customer. So clearly, it is in everyone's best interest to ensure that your customer feels like an honored guest. In fact, if you do a good enough job, you may be able to keep that customer for life.

Every interaction we have or do not have with our customers affects how they feel about us. In those first five minutes, we are either helping to retain or helping to repel our customers.

The following chapter features stories from customers who were influenced by the greeting they did or did not receive.

# STORIES *from* *the* FRONT

**[retain]**

MY HUSBAND AND I HAD JUST registered our new car at the Department of Motor Vehicles (located in a section of the city that we're not too familiar with) and had some free time to grab lunch before we returned to work. After driving a block or two and seeing several places not open for lunch, we pulled into the parking lot of what looked like a converted fast food restaurant, now a BBQ place called the Limp Lizard (the sign was small and the exterior made it hard to figure out what was inside). The name seemed questionable, and I was a little hesitant to head inside.

When we walked in, the first thing we saw was a bar in the middle of the restaurant with some rough-looking regulars seated around it. I was all set to turn around and head out, but the female bartender (an attractive short-haired woman in her late 40s) warmly called out, "Hey, welcome to the Limp Lizard! Please come in and grab any booth or table you want. Are you here for lunch?" She was genuinely friendly, authentic, caring, and made us feel like we were visiting her at home, not at her workplace. After we sat down, she came over within the first minute to deliver menus, talk about the place, tell us who our server was, ask us if it was our first time there, take drink orders, and make recommendations.

## The GREET YOUR CUSTOMER MANUAL

The restaurant turned out to be a funky Tex-Mex place with great custom decor and excellent food for the price. We're definitely going back there again.

But we wouldn't have stayed had she not called out immediately with real warmth and genuine care. It's tough in the restaurant business to communicate that kind of sincere attention to your customer, and she did it better than anyone I've encountered in a long, long time.

— LINDA LOWEN

**]repel[**

LAST NIGHT MY HUSBAND AND I went to dinner at Wendy's. The second we opened the door, the guy behind the counter yelled out, "Will this be for here or to go?" Geez, I hadn't even decided between the burger and the chicken sandwich yet. As we sat there, every customer through the door got the same greeting. Not "Hi, Welcome to Wendy's!" or "Merry Christmas, may I take your order?" Most people looked as startled as I felt. After all, he was basically saying, "Don't let the door hit you in the butt on the way in."

— JULIE STURGEON

**[retain]**

I GOT A GREETING TODAY FROM Amanda here at the executive meeting place where I checked into my room. It is called Warren House and it is a delightful English Country meeting place for companies.

When I walked in the door, Amanda, the greeter at the table jumped up, smiled very brightly and said, "Welcome, Mr. Brock. We're so glad to have you here!" WOW! And they say the

British are more staid and reserved. Amanda demonstrated powerful professionalism with not only her greeting but the level of service to assist me in whatever I needed at the hotel. This is the way it is supposed to be. What a thrill to see it in action!

— TERRY BROCK

**]repel[**

AS A FREQUENT TRAVELER I stay in countless hotels. It appears that the overwhelming majority of the folks at the registration desk received the same lousy training. After an arduous day of travel, the last thing a “guest” wants to hear upon collapsing on the desk is the rather ignorant-sounding “Checking in?” or the even worse, “Last name?” Starting with a simple “Welcome. We’re glad you’re here.” would sound like music to the ear.

— DAVID GREENBERG

**]repel[**

THE FIRST TIME I EVER SET FOOT in the hospital (where I now work) after my son, Lev, was born, the person who greeted me treated me like a suspect—with diffidence and suspicion—instead of like a stressed-out visitor to a brand new state-of-the-art children’s hospital. Even after I told her (in my admittedly hysterical state) that I needed to find the NICU, she asked me “why?”—as if I were headed there (with my mother in tow, holding me up because I had given birth less than 24 hours earlier) to steal sick babies, instead of to visit the one that belonged to me. It was by the grace of a hospital volunteer that I got a wheelchair and a kind escort on the journey to meet my very sick son in the NICU. It’s been close to four years and with lots more memories—good and bad—after that one. That greeting is burned on my brain.

— MICHELLE MIRSKY

**[retain]**

I BELIEVE THAT NO MATTER HOW BAD your day is, your response to a phone call is very important. It has come to a point in our country, that when you actually get a real live, nice, helpful person, it stands out much more in your mind than the ever-present unfriendly voice on the other end of the phone.

I make it a point whenever I receive helpful and friendly service on the phone to let them know how much I appreciate it. I also apply that to how I answer the phone. I try very hard to not only sound professional, but welcoming. There is a difference, and both are equally important. I never want to give someone the impression that they are a bother to me. And let's face it, not every phone call is received at a great time to take it. The simple rule of treating people how you want to be treated sounds clichéd, but it sounds like a very friendly "Hello," as well.

— DAN DAVIS

**]repel[**

I TRULY DISLIKE, AS IN, I get really annoyed by the greetings that some hotels have foisted on those answering their phones: stuff like "Good morning it's a beautiful day at the (hotel name) in (city name)." Sometimes, they're even longer. Often the bored employee says it so fast, that you are greeted by a very long string of mumbled syllables, when really "Hello" would do just fine—so you could go about your business of making a reservation or whatever.

— KATHY SEAL

**]repel[**

IN OUR LITTLE TOWN IN WISCONSIN, there are four gas stations on the main drag, one of which my family and I will not patronize,

simply because of the way I was greeted (or more accurately, NOT greeted) over a year ago, when I bought gas. I used my credit card to fill up outside, but came in the store to buy some gum and a soda. The lady behind the counter not only failed to greet me when I walked in (I was the only customer in the place), she refused to acknowledge me or make eye contact at all as she was TAKING MY MONEY! On my way out, I said, somewhat sappily, “Hey, you have a great day now!” to no response whatsoever. The word clueless springs to mind—and, I haven’t been back since.

— JON QUADE

**]repel[**

WHEN I BEGAN MY CAREER (many years ago), I was trying to build my wardrobe by purchasing a few items of exceptionally high quality and the rest within my affordable price range for my salary at the time. On one shopping occasion, I visited a retailer of fine men’s clothing in Canada. Upon entering the store, I was eyed up and down by the clerk and was pretty much snubbed, since I did not have the “appearance” of dropping a large sum of money. As a result, I vowed never to return to that brand, and I have maintained that promise now twenty years later.

Unfortunately for them, they have not been in my consideration set for over two decades, nor have I ever introduced any of my three sons to them.

— MICHAEL MATTALO

**[retain]**

THERE ARE TWO LOCAL DINERS—both equidistant from our house, in opposite directions. We chose one, liked the food, and found

## *The GREET YOUR CUSTOMER MANUAL*

ourselves there usually more than once a week. We tried to build some rapport with staff, but it didn't seem to take. They were nice enough, but there was something missing. After almost a year of consistent patronage, we were still greeted with "Hello, how many?" when we came in the door. That was all. More than 75 meals there and they couldn't say, "Hi, it's good to see you again?"

We finally decided to try the other establishment for a while. It didn't take long before the "new" place became "our" place. Within weeks, the staff at the new place was acknowledging us when we arrived, offering us "the usual" for our beverage orders, and asking where we'd been if we were absent for more than a few days. Regardless of where we were seated, all the servers would acknowledge us with a wave or a tableside visit.

Five years later, we still think of this place first when we want to go out for a quick bite to eat. There are lots of options around us, but this is our go-to place. All because they not only greeted us with enthusiasm on our first visit, but remembered us when we returned.

— PAM WYESS

# *Praise for* THE GREET YOUR CUSTOMER MANUAL

**MOST COMPANIES DON'T GET** that successful businesses greet their customers with a friendly "Hello!". Laurie Brown does. And she understands what every element of greeting has to do with loyal profitable customers. Buy this book today, start implementing it tomorrow, and Laurie will take you from Greet to Great.

Jeffrey Gitomer

Author of *The Little Gold Book of YES! Attitude*

**CONVERTING YOUR CUSTOMERS** into apostles starts with how your customer is greeted. Whether you greet them on the phone, in person, by email or through a website, you need to know—and use—the simple actionable tips included in Laurie Brown's "The Greet Your Customer Manual."

Dr. Tony Alessandra, author of *The NEW Art of Managing People* and *The Platinum Rule*

**GREETING A CLIENT PROPERLY** seems like something everyone should innately know how to do, though haven't we all experienced service providers who don't shine at this most basic skill? In "The Greet Your Customer Manual," Laurie Brown covers the basics and so much more. From managing an encounter with an unhappy customer to leaving a voice message that gets a call back, she's created an accessible manual so you can master all the nuances of making customers feel welcomed and engaged.

Marilyn Suttle and Lori Jo Vest, co-authors of *Who's Your Gladys?*  
*How to Turn Even the Most Difficult Customer into Your Biggest Fan*

**THE FIRST MOMENTS WITH A CUSTOMER** set the tone for whatever is to follow. More than a book, this is a manual that contains practical and easy-to-implement techniques about how to greet your customers. If you have any interaction at all with customers, then you must read this book — I mean manual!

Shep Hyken, best selling author of *The Cult of the Customer*

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