



Positive Service Pays in Tough Times

By Dee Dee Raap

If you were offered the simple choice between negative and positive, which would you choose?

Hopefully you said positive. That's what your customers choose because people are attracted to other positive people and businesses.

But these are hard times. A recent photo in the newspaper showed a sign that read, "Wanted: Customers. No experience needed." It was a grim message that business is tough this summer.

In hard economic times, it can be challenging to be positive. We can get downright grouchy when we fill our car and face the fact that it costs more to do what we've always done. Whether we're driving our kids to the pool or library, driving to work or to a movie, it costs more. A lot more.

The pain at the pump is a negative we'd prefer not to face. With no choice—most of us have to drive to do what we do—it's easy to become negative over the pain of rising costs affecting every part of our lives.

Staying positive and focused on the good is difficult in any negative environment. In the dark days of World War II, President Franklin Roosevelt inspired Americans with "The Four Freedoms" our country values:

1. Freedom of speech
2. Freedom from want
3. Freedom of religion
4. Freedom from fear.

Norman Rockwell showcased each in quintessential American scenes: people praying in church, a man standing up to speak in a New England town hall meeting, a woman serving a turkey dinner to her family, and parents tucking their child into bed.

The worst of times helps us remember what really matters, and to replace fear with the strength that comes from our values. Our values—the things we cherish about America—are

still there. When we value optimism, believing we'll get through this tough time, we can be more positive and give customers the positive service they deserve.

Great service starts with our values. My gut was wrenched with fear last October when my son-in-law deployed to Iraq for his second tour as a member of the 101st Airborne Division. But I had several presentations that week, so I had to deal with my fear. I remembered my mother's optimism, a woman who survived the Great Depression and married a man who was awarded three bronze stars in WWII. I dealt with my fear by doing what my mother taught me to do: I counted my blessings, focused on the positive and what I could do, not on my fear of losing my son-in-law.

We just celebrated America's 232nd birthday. We've got a lot that needs to be changed in America, but we're America. We will figure it out. Be optimistic. Look at every bright side you can find. Count your blessings. It will help you inspire your employees to serve customers with a positive, friendly attitude that makes them want to come back, tell others about you, and buy more. In the best of times or the worst of times, being positive creates service that helps your business succeed.

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About Dee Dee Raap:

Dee Dee Raap is a service expert, national speaker and consultant who loves to help people make their journey great. Dee Dee believes we all serve, and how we serve, lead and live is guided by the authentic, timeless values inspired by our moms and other key people. Putting those values to practice every day not only makes service great, but helps organizations grow and retain employees, a result Dee Dee's clients and audiences know well.

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