

# Inspiring Innovation in the East of England

## Maximising Employer Engagement

East of England, Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2011



### ***Mehrabian's communication study***

Albert Mehrabian conducted a number of studies to understand how we communicate with each other (face to face). He concluded that there are three elements to our communication;

Words – 7%

Tone – 38%

Body Language – 55%

***To influence anything, we all need to be excellent communicators. Communication is only ever complete when it is two way.***

***Our impression of a company is often formed by one interaction with one individual. This then influences our future buying patterns / opinion of this company and what we then communicate to others about them.***

***Each communication we have with our customers, impacts on their impression of your organisation regardless of type.***

### ***Customer Loyalty***

Contract Clients – Those that stay with your business because they are tied into a contract with you, do we take these customers for granted?

Convenience Clients – They feel that service is okay, and it is too much hassle to change. A risky group as a bad interaction could make them decide to make the effort.

Brand Loyal Clients – Even though there are other people offering the same service, and may even be doing it cheaper they are loyal to your brand.

### ***Referrals***

If you could use one marketing method to win more business what would it be?

Brochures / Mailings – They can work, look fantastic and give your company a real feeling of worth. They are expensive, lots of them aren't read by the intended reader, and they often don't really convert into sales.

Advertising – Adverts can be very powerful, they won't guarantee a sale and are often the most expensive option.

PR – Very powerful, but rarely gets a 10 on the convincing scale on its own, especially if you are a smaller business.

Referrals – This has the least negatives, and is the most likely to win business. The cheapest option.

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### ***The Golden Rules of Referrals***

1. **To get referrals, you are going to have to do more than nothing.** There is always a feeling within businesses that 'we do a good job; so customers are bound to recommend us' but they usually don't. Some do, but it's much rarer than you would expect. You are going to have to actively seek out the referrals that you want.
2. **For the referral to work there must be an obvious benefit to all three parties.** If one of the three doesn't benefit, it's not a successful sustainable business process, meaning you are unlikely to get any further referrals involving these two parties again. What is going to make the referrer want to contact his friend, think about what makes a learner / client want to go the extra mile.
3. **Be specific when asking for referrals.** Be precise in what you are looking for so that the referrer can recommend the right target that will then be beneficial for all 3 parties. If they feel that they have wasted their effort and referred the wrong type of person/business they are unlikely to do it again.
4. **Be clear on who you are asking for referrals from.** Clients, Partner Organisations, Learners, Employees
5. **Make the process easy** for people to refer new customers to your organisation, and communicate it out.

### ***Tools to make a positive impact***

**Questioning Skills** – There are two main types of questioning styles used when talking to customers

#### Closed Questions

A closed question can be answered with either a 'yes' or 'no'. They are used because;

- They give you *facts*.
- They are *easy* to answer.
- They are *quick* to answer.

#### Open Questions

They normally begin with 'what' 'when' 'how' 'why' 'where' and lead the person answering to give you a longer answer. They are used because;

- They ask the respondent to *think* and reflect.
- They will give you *opinions* and *feelings*.
- The person asking the questions is in control of the conversation

**Listening Skills** – It's important to listen to what your customer is telling you, if this is done right then your customer will feel engaged with you. You will also spot potential buying signals or objections that will allow you to maximise your relationship / sales.

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**Language** – The words we use can have an effect on the communication you have with your customer. Avoid using negative words such as the examples listed below;

But, Problem, Difficult, Unfortunately, Ummm, Obviously, Tough Market, Recession, Redundancy

Focus on using positive words like the examples listed below;

Can, Do, Solution, Of Course, Adding Value, Skills for the future, Certainly, Opportunity, Investment, Future, yes, Growth, Expansion, Will.

## How do you interact with customers – how do your staff interact with customers?

*There are other people in your market doing what you do, what is that differentiates you?*

*Each and every one of us has the ability to influence how our customers perceive us, either positively or negatively. This will make or break the long term success of your companies.*

## Share one thing that you think your organisation does really well in Employer Engagement

- Courtesy calls to employers on regular basis to keep channels of communication open.
- We work as a team to respond to enquiries from employers and learners promptly (cover for each other).
- Analyse the needs of the whole business, not just the needs you believe they have
- We routinely offer solutions to clients problems
- Teamwork – willing to help others out
- Maintain close contact with employer and be flexible
- We have an up to date learning platform that is based around learner wants and needs
- Employer questionnaires
- Well trained staff from wide range of backgrounds
- We always ask the client for a referral whether 16-18 year old or other business
- Test market materials with clients
- Communication with employers and learners by doing questionnaires or reviews of service they've received
- Pro active response to needs of learner / business
- Our flexibility and willingness to go all over
- All training done in the workplace
- We are a very proactive provider, employer responsive at all times
- Employer / learner newsletter quarterly with good news stories, safeguarding etc.
- Listen and advise • Flexibility • Advice & guidance • Very responsive
- Responsive to companies needs and good regular communication with local businesses
- Working with various partners to get referrals
- Providing holistic training solutions to the customers
- Being positive with clients – always find them an option

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### ***Identify one thing that you're going to do differently as a result of today's workshop***

- Look in to refer a friend grants for learner and employer
- Review our referral process / incentive schemes
- Client referral scheme
- Do this session with Staff and focus on referrals in marketing
- Implement a referral scheme
- Pass information on to the team about today and how we can use it
- To raise the issue of: 'Everybody having the ability to influence our customers and stakeholders with regard to how they perceive us
- Get our name out in this area
- Focus more on the TYPES of customers and especially 'brand loyal' and focus on getting referrals
- Be more positive
- Design a referral scheme for customers
- Importance of communication – first impression of the company
- The questions we ask and answers we get from referrals – USE POSITIVE LANGUAGE
- Suggest that we look at whether we need to reduce marketing increase selling
- Not to take things for granted

### ***Resources / Websites***

Albert Mehrabian's site <http://www.kaaj.com/psych/>

Best and worst customer service examples <http://www.focus.com/fyi/10-best-and-10-worst-companies-customer-service/>

Advice on how to improve your communication within your organisation, making communication stick  
<http://www.andybounds.com/improve/>

For further guidance on the topics covered today or a more detailed solution for your business please contact;

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