

Sales and Service Excellence

ESSENTIALS

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Essentials of
team leadership

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It's All About the Ducks

Quack on...

By Bruce Hodes

This article opens with Ernie's song from Sesame Street. It goes like this:

"Rubber Ducky, you're the one,
You make bath time lots of fun,
Rubber Ducky, I'm awfully fond of you
(Woh woh, bee do!)"

I love them. So small and cute..... Let's see there is the blue one with the green hair – I think that is punk duck. There is the one dressed like a cardinal - that is certainly pope duck. There is just one that looks like a yellow duck – that is regular duck. Then there is the one that looks like a penguin with the red hat and green scarf - Black duck. Then the newest one is coming out of a cup cake - could that be happy duck?? Must be. So you see these ducks run the gambit of representing the world as we know it.

These are my travel companions - my little duckies. They live in my shaving kit. Whenever I see them my heart sings and I am happy.

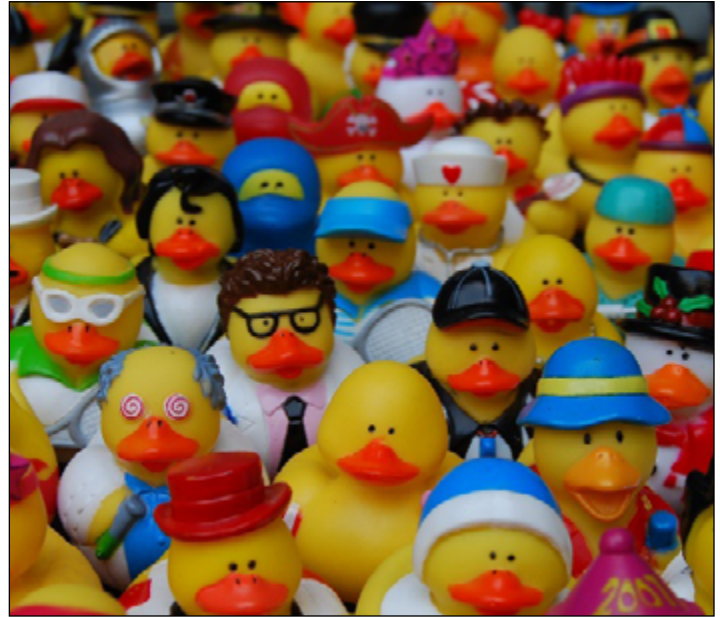
Where did these rubber duckies come from? No, I did not steal them from my granddaughter Sienna. Their origin – hospitality gifts from the Hampton Inn in Eau Claire Wisconsin.

I look forward to staying at this Hampton Inn in Eau Claire Wisconsin because I get a new duck every time I visit.....it is a special something that costs nothing and really delights me. Who knew that a bald 61 year old man could be brought to their knees by a duck?

During one visit, I asked the extremely vivacious twenty something hotel attendant "what's up with the ducks?" I actually put my hands on the service counter, leaned over and said "yeah really what is up with those ducks. She did not miss a beat, "It started with a wedding. The bride and groom got the ducks for all the people staying at the hotel. The guests raved about them. Ever since then, we leave a duck in the bathroom to wait for the new arriving guest." This only happens at this Hampton Inn. It is an act of god. Yikes, who knew that such a cheap chatzke would turn me into a loyal customer and raving fan?

This raises the question, what is your company's duck? What aspect of customer service delights the customer and excites them? Perhaps it is telling jokes and rolling toilet paper down the aisle on a Southwest Airlines' flight; The piano playing in the basement at Nordstrom's; How about everyone getting a box of milk duds at Petersons in the Chicago loop by the wizened and old maître d? Or the old standby, yelling and crass waits staff at Ed Divebecks and Dicks on the docks. Not to mention getting handed water by the doorman at a posh hotel bordering central park after a sweaty run. Then there was the van that stopped at a San Diego resort only to offer me water to support another sweaty run. Can anyone say \$99 AppleCare?

All of these things are economical business expenses (except for the piano playing at Nordstrom's). Again what is your company's duck? Don't duck this question. My humor quacks me up, really. Is it quacking you up yet? At my company, CMI, our duck is following up after every business interaction with a phone call asking for feedback. Our customers like this. Also all notes taken during the session are typed up and sent with an inspiring letter by yours truly to our clients. Our customers also like this. On behalf of our clients



we donate money to a worthy cause at Xmas, also if my phone rings out loud during a session I will donate \$100 to somebodys charity of choice. Our customers also like these. Again all these initiatives are relatively simple, inexpensive and engender customer loyalty.

Here are some guidelines for creating a duck for your customer service strategy:

1. Make it simple
2. Make it cheap
3. Make it unique and indicative of your company's culture
4. Make it something that customers will adore
5. Make it easy for the staff to carry through

So there you have it, a simply ducky response to making you and your customer service strategy accessible to someone who is important to you: your customer. Quack on...**SSE**



Since growing up in his family's boating business to founding his company CMI, **Bruce Hodes** has dedicated himself to helping companies grow by developing executive leadership teams, business leaders and executives into powerful performers. Bruce's adaptable Breakthrough Strategic Business Planning methodology has been specifically designed for small-to-mid-sized companies and is especially valuable for family company challenges.

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