



The Enemy of the Rainmaker

Companies often start via PR and then defend their position through advertising. And when that stops working - panic!

And what is the root cause of this panic? Often the fault lies with brand cowards. And chances are you have brand cowards working for you right now!!

They are the new (and sometimes not-so-new) employees who believe blindly in the corporate brand on their business card and who are ill-equipped and/or unaccustomed to acting as warriors for the brand.

They believe your corporate propaganda, PR and advertising and forget that clients and customers need to be perpetually courted and wooed and re-courted and re-wooed.

They often display little or no people skills, often come across as arrogant - and as soon as the clients find a more attentive suitor (and feel able to flee) they gone and never return.

Until all team members emerge from behind the brand and the logo on their shiny new business cards and understand the heritage of their organisation and the fact that tomorrow's business is generated by how

you act today, the very few rainmakers will have to carry the very many passengers who assume that bonuses are a given and that the money will keep rolling in.

Employees must know and understand that their key job is to keep customers happy and loyal, and to detect and deal with possible discontent before it manifests itself in a Dear Johnny letter. But it is far more than just maintaining a relationship.

Arrogance, especially in professional services firms, steals in at an alarming rate, often accompanied by an ignorance and almost total lack of articulation as to the relative competitive advantages and differentiators of your organisation. Do you know them? They are the key to securing tomorrow's business. Employees end up saying things like "Well we're the biggest" or "We have a global network with global reach." or other inanities that mean nothing to the client apart from "Wow - you guys are expensive - and I'm outta here as soon as I damn well can!"

So what's the answer? It means understanding that the client is actually the fee-payer, the king - and your team had better keep them happy - on an ongoing basis!! And knowing what your client wants and why are best placed to deliver it.

And yes - it is expensive. It takes time and effort and discipline. But whatever you charge your customer - whether it is £2.50 for a sandwich or £500 for an hour of legal advice it is time and effort well spent.

My greengrocer smiles when I spend my £3.54 once a week, asks how I am and agrees with me about the weather. Because she knows that that's over £150 a year. And because I am made to feel like I am worth £1500 a year 52 times a year I keep going back to the same place. Successful restaurant owners make sure their waiters and waitresses treat their customers like £2000 a year customers - whatever the cost of a meal!

Now your waiters and waitresses (probably called Executives, Associates or Consultants) should understand that each customer could be worth thousands and thousands over the years - if they keep them happy. Leaving the rainmakers to go out and find new clients rather than replacement clients while the "service department" keeps cloud-seeding your existing client base.

BMW South Africa teaches its people that Sales sell the first car - the Service Department the next 7.

How good is your Service Department? How many of your people think they are in the service department. © 2007 Copyright Peter Botting