

The Leader: Polite

by **Frederick E Roach**

How would we define customer service in the most basic way? Customer service involves something as simple as being polite to those we serve.

Our September and October issues of Leadership Brief have concentrated on issues that will build a more effective customer service effort. In this space, we've explored who is our customer. We've always concentrated on our No. 1 customer - the patient. This basic within our Baylor culture.

We've learned it's equally important to treat our fellow employees as customers. This tends to create the positive work environment we all desire.

Politeness doesn't come from being passive, but from inner strength. When Jesus taught, He said: "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." When we analyze the word "meek" from the original Greek, we see that it means "strength under control." To be polite strengthens both the one who takes the initiative to be polite, and the recipient, too.

Politeness has many ideas imbedded within it. To be polite to a person, we first must attempt to understand the person and to be as proactive as appropriate. While the definition for polite in Webster's New World Dictionary is short, its implications endure.

The dictionary says being polite is the same as "having or showing good taste; using good manners; being courteous, considerate and tactful."

You sense the potential of politeness when visiting a Ritz-Carlton hotel. They have a simple motto: "We are ladies and gentlemen, serving ladies and gentlemen."

It's such a basic idea that it permeates the action of all employees.

Key Aspects of Politeness

1. Consideration

This requires we consider others' feelings. We should be sensitive to the needs and desires of others. Our action or inaction affects those with whom we work and those we serve.

2. Communication

We are constantly communicating. Our words are important. But our non-verbal communication speaks so loud at times people don't really hear what we say. A polite communicator considers the other person's temperament, and adjusts his or her actions accordingly.

3. Courtesy

In the book, "Let's Talk," I wrote to my son: "There's a basic courtesy due every person. It should become automatic that we treat others properly...Being courteous will strengthen your life and make your relationships more meaningful."



4. **Compassion**

When we care about others, we tend to be polite to them. At Baylor, we've "signed on" to be a part of a caring business. We should strive to live this promise of compassion.

5. **Concern**

Nothing much happens until we are concerned enough to make a commitment. Our concern at Baylor should be the well-being of others. Politeness is a way to reach out to those in need.

Favorite Quotes About Politeness

"True politeness consists in treating others just as you love to be treated yourself."
The Earl of Chesterfield

"Politeness is the result of good sense and good nature."
Oliver Goldsmith

"Politeness comes from within, from the heart; but if the forms of politeness are dispensed with, the spirit and the thing itself soon die away."
John Hall

"Politeness is a mixture of discretion and circumspection spread over all we do and say."
Charles Evremond

"It is wise to apply the oil of refined politeness to the mechanism of friendship."
Colette

"There is a courtesy of the heart. It is akin to love. Out of it arises the purest courtesy in the outward behavior."
Johann Goethe

"There can be no defense like elaborate courtesy."
E. V. Lucas

"Politeness is to human nature what warmth is to wax."
Arthur Schopenhauer