

Good Customer Service Begins with You

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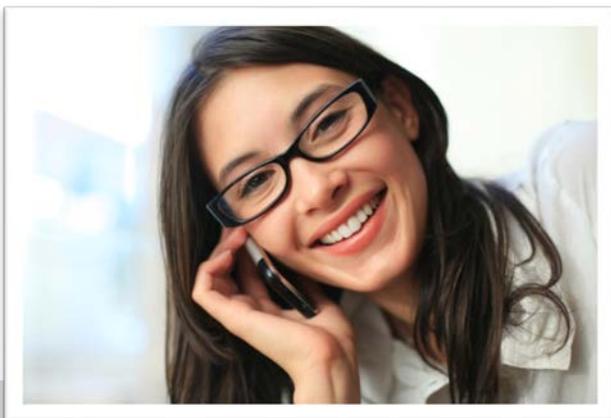
How many of you have had a bad experience with someone providing you a service? I know I have. When working with clients we need to remember how to manage and deliver good customer service. Here are some of the basic things to consider:

Set up a regular time to check and return emails.

Clients often imagine that you are sitting at your computer when you might be on the road or working with another client. It is not always feasible to respond immediately to every email. One good way to manage email is to block off an hour each day to respond to inquiries. Those emails that will require more time to respond make sure that you send a temporary response such as: "I received your email of December 14, 2013 requesting assistance. I will call you on (date and time) if this is not a good time for you please email with a time that will work for you."

Timely response to phone messages is CRITICAL.

Set up a response system. Check your messages in the morning and in the afternoon. Return the calls in a



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timely manner, that day if possible. If you cannot reach people leave a message on their voice mail. Make sure that you leave your name, organization, phone number, time and date of the call, and that you are calling in responding to their call of a given date and time. If in their message they asked a question you may be able to leave the answer on their voicemail. Keep track of the returned calls and messages you have left by keeping a phone log. Generally, it is better to communicate on the phone person to person rather than leaving a message.

Be positive, pleasant and respectful. When talking to clients maintain a positive and pleasant attitude. If the interaction you have with clients is positive and helpful they are more likely to come back to your organization for additional assistance.

Never interrupt a client when they are speaking. Clients want to be heard. Listen to what they are saying. Ask questions to clarify and work toward better understanding by being fully engaged with the individual. You may want to jot down notes, maintain good eye contact and wait until they are finished speaking before you begin asking questions if needed to gain more understanding. A good rule of thumb is to use understandable language not using organizational jargon.

Do not judge a person by the way customers/clients appear, appearances can fool you. Treat everyone like you would like to be treated, the golden rule of serving customers is paramount.

Be on time. It is always a good idea to be at least 30-45 minutes ahead of time when you are in charge of a meeting to make sure the room and equipment is ready to go.

Be real. If a client makes a joke you can laugh, but be careful about making jokes about different issues and events as you do not know what subjects are taboos to your client. Stay away from sensitive subjects – politics, gun control, sex, religion, or immigration.

Always ask, “Is there anything else I can help you with?” Send a client away with additional information and a way to reconnect with you directly or online. Ask them if there is any suggestion they would like to make to help you improve your service. Listen and write down what they say. Thank them.

Let Me Show You the Ways I Care!

*By Ted Futris, Ph.D.
Family Life Specialist*

If you're like most couples, you frequently say “I love you” to your spouse. But have you ever paused to consider what those three little words really mean? Does love for you mean caring for your partner rather than taking care of or taking from your partner?

Here are some tips for showing your partner how much you “love” him or her:

- ♦ Take care of yourself. Partners shouldn't have to sacrifice their personal desires or needs for each other. Work to feel good about yourself so you can be caring and nurturing toward your partner.

- ♦ Make time for each other. Do something you both enjoy on a regular basis. Children, work, other commitments and activities all take time away from your time together. Don't allow any one thing to crowd out your relationship. Healthy relationships have a balance of time for self (“me”) and time together (“we”).

- ♦ Keep the communication open. Intimacy cannot be achieved until both partners are willing to be open and honest. Openly and honestly talk about each other's needs. Unspoken expectations are likely to go unmet.

- ♦ View differences as an opportunity to grow. Conflict in a relationship is normal. Help each other feel comfortable sharing concerns without fear of being attacked, punished or lectured. Explore ways to remain calm when working through disagreements. Holding on to angry feelings doesn't make people feel very loving - be willing to forgive.

- ♦ Play, laugh and have fun. Be spontaneous. Show affection openly and often. Send text messages or leave notes that remind your partner how you feel about him/her. It's true that actions speak louder than words, but we still like to hear the words too. Say “I love you” out loud to your partner.

When your partner sees you acting in caring, understanding and affectionate ways, he or she will feel loved. It is easier for couples to be sources of support for each other, even when times get tough, when you do these things. What are you doing to keep your love strong for a lifetime?

For more tips and resources to support your relationship, check out the Marriage Matters Fact Sheet Series at www.gamarriages.org or contact your local County Extension office!

Get started today!

Sit down with your partner and individually write down ways you like to receive love. As you share your list, brainstorm ways each of you can show love in the way you each desire.

Discuss ways you each could improve individually and together in taking care of yourself, making couple time, communicating, dealing with conflict in a healthy way, and having fun together.

Put your ideas in writing and check back with each other over time to see if things are going well. Be open to change, over time, as needs evolve.

Lumens: The New Way to Shop for Light Bulbs

by Pamela Turner, Ph.D.

Housing and Environment Specialist

In recent years our lighting options have undergone many changes. Now when you go out looking for a 60 watt incandescent light bulb, you won't find one. What you will find are 60 watt equivalent lights, such as an energy efficient incandescent bulb that only uses 15 watts of energy, but produces 800 lumens of light. The initial cost of the bulb may be more, but over time you will save money.

For example, if you use a 60 watt (800 lumen) incandescent light bulb 2 hours a day, it will cost you about \$4.80 a year and last about 1,000 hours. Compare that to an annual cost of \$1.20 for a 15 watt compact fluorescent light that will last 10,000 hours; or \$1.00 a year for a 12 watt LED with a life of 25,000 hours. Whatever type of lighting you choose you will save money and still get the same brightness from the bulb that you got from your 60 watt bulb.

Most household light bulbs must now carry a label to help you transition to thinking in "lumens."

Lighting Facts Per Bulb	
Brightness	820 lumens
Estimated Yearly Energy Cost	\$7.23
Based on 3 hrs/day, 11¢/kWh Cost depends on rates and use	
Life	1.4 years
Based on 3 hrs/day	
Light Appearance	
Warm ▲▼ Cool	
	2700 K
Energy Used	60 watts

The next time you add 60 watt light bulbs to your shopping list, write 800 lumens next to it. This will help you think in lumens.

Here is a chart to help you select a bulb that gives you the amount of light you are used to.

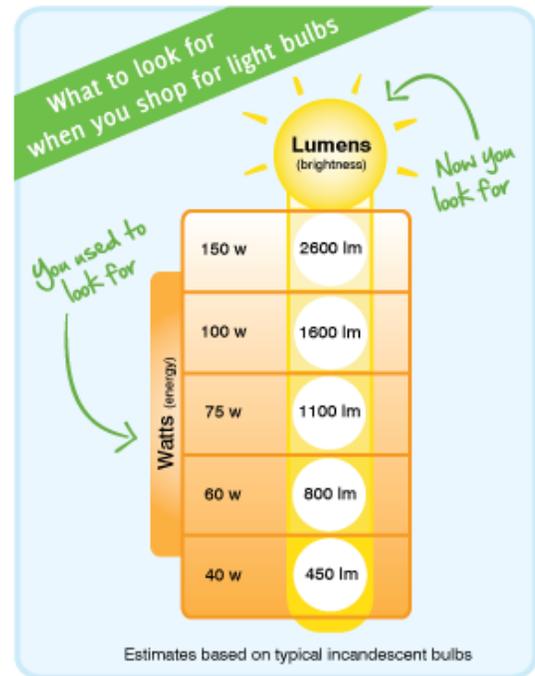


Image from: FTC (<http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0164-shopping-light-bulbs>)

You can learn more about new lighting options at <http://energy.gov/energysaver/articles/lighting-choices-save-you-money>.



For more information,
please contact your local
Extension Office by calling
1-800-ASK-UGA1
or by visiting
www.GAfamilies.org

