



# BEING PRESENT IS A GIFT TO ALL

## THE REAL MEANING OF REAL TIME

by Craig Harrison

They say wherever you go, there you are. Yet how present are you at any given time and place you find yourself? Many professionals appear in body but little else. Don't get marked as missing in action.

In the last week I encountered the following professionals missing in action:

### ■ Out of Tune

My local mail carrier arrived each day, wearing her iPod and delivering my neighbors' mail to me. She's in her own world. She dumps the mail in a pile each day. In addition to my mail I consistently receive mail from neighbors up and down my street, as well as mail of neighbors two streets over at the same street number. So much for accuracy. Doesn't she realize close only counts in horse-shoes and hand grenades?

### ■ Disconnect

An airport shuttle driver who greeted us at our hotel and attempted to drive the entire route to the airport while engaged in a phone conversation he was in when he arrived. True, the driver used an earpiece so we only had to hear his side of the conversation. Yet whether on surface streets or the freeway the constant was the phone call, not our safety.

### ■ Sickening Service

I showed up at my HMO for a doctor's appointment and was greeted by a lack of

greeting. The receptionist was on the phone, and without making eye contact, stuck out her hand for my medical ID card, processed it, took my money and returned my card, without saying a single word (to me). Her attention was reserved for her call. The call proceeded long after I paid and sat down to wait for my physician. No greeting, smile, acknowledgment of me as a valued patient, or even as a person. Hers was an extended personal call. (How do I know? I was forced to listen in the waiting room for the next 10 minutes.)

Is it too much to ask that people be present when we interact with them? You say you're multi-tasking, I say you're giving poor customer service.

You say you can do two things at once. I say it's disrespectful and often downright rude to divide attention from a customer or client who has called or is face-to-face. And what's more, the results speak for themselves: errors, omissions, sloppy products and services, missed opportunities to strengthen customer loyalty and allegiance. And a degrading feeling for customers held captive by inattentive service providers.

### Are you Present and Accounted For?

Audit your own interactions with customers. Ask yourself the following:

- Do you greet them with genuine affection?

- Do you know and use their name? (Are you pronouncing it correctly? Not sure? Ask!)
- Are you giving them your undivided attention?
- Are you giving good and consistent eye contact?
- Are you preoccupied with a previous client, customer or call?
- Are you easily distracted?
- If the phone rings while you're in conversation, do you let it ring through?
- Do you listen actively and intently or are you "faking" it?

In today's world customers long to be heard, to be understood and to feel others care about them. Help customers feel connected! Show them you care. Treat them as if they're the most important people in the world. For the brief time they're in your midst, give them your undivided attention. Don't just be here now...but hear now! Or, forever lament the loss of treasured customers! ■

San Francisco Bay Area-based Professional speaker Craig Harrison founded Expressions of Excellence™ to provide sales and service solutions through speaking. For information on keynotes, training, coaching, curriculum for licensing and more, call (510) 547-0664, surf [www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com](http://www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com) or E-mail

Craig@VoiceOfCustomerService.com for inquiries.

