



SERVE

&

YE SHALL SPEAK (MORE)!

Customer Service for Speakers

**FOR NSA/NC'S
MEET THE PROS**

WESTIN SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT HOTEL
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Why and How Speakers Should Be Service-Oriented

Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve.
You don't have to have a college degree to serve.
You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve.
You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.
— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Case for Customer Service

People do business with those that are easy to work with.

Actions on your part that make their jobs easier give you the edge. Seize it!

As a speaker you are a service provider...begin before you're hired.

Being Service Oriented

To be service-oriented means understanding how to deliver service to those you work with, and want to work with: meeting planners, training managers, HR directors, Speakers Bureaus, committees and other decision makers.

Goals

1. Be easy to find, easy to reach, easy to hire and easy to re-hire.
2. Make yourself the preferred speaker for those you work with.
3. Build your business and its practices with your customers in mind.
4. Let every aspect of your system reinforce your strong customer service orientation!
5. Think long-term relationships...build trust and confidence from Day 1.

Checklist: Are you easy to find and easy to reach?

- ___ In phone books, in directories, registered with search engines, known in your hometown, a household name, etc.?
- ___ An easy to remember company name, a name that's easy to spell, an easy URL to type? A Toll-free number? FAX? E-mail address? Voice Mail?
- ___ Does your Web Site host tools to help others hire, promote you?
 - ? Photos (high and low resolution, for web and print purposes)
 - ? One Sheet or Biography (see www.craigspeaks.com/about_craig.html)
 - ? Pre-Program Survey (see www.craigspeaks.com/harrison_survey.pdf)

How Service-Oriented Are You?

Phone Message: Does your outgoing message clearly state who they've reached? How to bypass your message for future reference? How long they can speak for? When they will hear back by? Other ways of reaching you (web, e-mail, FAX, etc.) Is yours current? *The relationship begins when the phone rings.*



E-Mail: Is your e-mail address easy to remember and type? Is it consistent with your web site, business name? Is your e-mail *signature* service oriented? (Does it contain various ways of reaching you: phone, FAX, voice mail, URL, address)? Does it impart information about who you are, the benefits you provide, the service you provide? *Options equate to service!*



Web Site: Is your URL intuitive to use? Does your home page load fast? Are navigational devices (buttons, links) on the bottom as well as top or sides? Is there a site map? A search engine? Ways of contacting you on every page? Is it inviting? 'Clean' to look at? Clear in its organization? Can people find what they need on it easily? (booking request form, calendar, fee schedule, biography, photo, pre-program survey, etc.) See www.craigspeaks.com for some of these features. *Anticipate their needs and be able to respond to them.*



Collateral materials: Do your one-sheet, brochures, business cards and various collateral materials all contain multiple ways to reach you? Is info easy to find? Is there a consistent look and feel to your materials? Is it easy for the reader to discern? What tools can you give clients to help them succeed when hiring you: room layout diagram, equipment checklist, pre-program questionnaire, PR about yourself so they can promote you? *Make it easy for them!*



Your Elevator Speech: Be able to succinctly state who you are, what you speak on, what's unique about you or your message, and the benefits or solutions you provide. Be memorable! Be upbeat when you deliver yours. Deliver yours conversationally, whether on the phone or in person. See Craig's tip booklet at the NSA/NC Resource Center or through his web site: www.craigspeaks.com/elevator_booklet.html. *Always be focused on what you can do for your prospect or client (as opposed to just what you do).*



Your Language: Using service-oriented, pro-active, positive language reinforces your commitment to stellar customer service: "How can I help?" "I'd be happy to..."
"So glad to help you!" "It would be my pleasure..." "Here's what I can do."
"I'm glad to be of service to you."
Seek to under-promise and over-deliver. Exceed their expectations
Give your customers lagniappe (a little something extra).*
Be a resource: referrals, coaching, citations, content for their newsletters, etc.



For a description of Lagniappe go to www.craigspeaks.com/lagniappe.html

Professional Speaker...At Your Service!

By Craig Harrison

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You don't have to speak on customer service to be service oriented as a speaker. There are ample ways you, as a service provider, can separate yourself from the competition through your service orientation. Meeting planners and other decision makers will greatly appreciate your attention to customer service, and your reward will be more speaking opportunities. Let me show you how.

Are You Easy?

As a speaker, trainer, consultant or coach, are you easy to find? How many ways can you be found? In the phone book? Via a website or multiple sites? Through associations, partnerships, web portals and other avenues? Through articles, advertisements or as frequently read on electronic bulletin boards? Visibility is key here, and so is consistency. If you can regularly be seen somewhere, through a regular column, consistent class schedules, or in other ways, you're making it easy for people to contact you.

They'll Never Forget What's Her Name

Is your company name easy to spell or remember? If you are relying on your last name and it's not easy to spell, are you using a mnemonic or acronym or some device to implant your name in peoples' memory banks for easy retrieval? Do you have a toll free number whose letters spell something memorable and relevant?

So You're A Speaker...What's Your Point?

By the way, is it obvious what you can do for others? Telling them you're a speaker, trainer, magician and astronaut is wonderful...but what does it do for them? If it's not obvious you may be missing out on the ways you can help them. Make sure you, and thus others, know just what your claim to fame is, and what's special about you. Past NSA/NC chapter president Gary Purece has taught us well about the importance of our Unique Selling Proposition (USP).

The easier you make it for others to understand what you can do for them, the more service oriented you are. People are looking for professionals who can make them money, save them money, save them time, improve their efficiency, enhance their esteem, teach them new skills, improve their health or even lengthen their lifespan. What solutions can you provide? How clearly are you telling people through collateral materials such as your business card, one sheet, article tag lines, phone messages and e-mail signature files?

Don't Be A Phonie!

Is your outgoing message service oriented? Is the voice friendly and intelligible? Is the information pertinent? Are there instructions for bypassing the message should the caller so desire? Will it be obvious the caller reached their intended party? Do you have a call back policy that you honor religiously? Is it common knowledge? You can care for

your caller before you actually speak to them through a well-conceived outgoing message. Do you let them know you're glad they called, instruct them on alternate ways of reaching you such as via FAX, e-mail or your website, and let them know the duration of the message they can leave? In these ways and more you are demonstrating a strong customer service orientation.

Is Yours A Tangled Web?

Your website has the potential to offer excellent customer service 24/7. Most speaker sites offer detailed information on topics, background, credentials, references and even availability. Some quote fees; some showcase audio or video clips; many offer free downloads of articles or learning tools. Many sell product, or link to sites where their product can be bought, such as through Amazon.com. In these ways your site is service oriented. It anticipates the needs of visitors and provides solutions to their frequently asked questions.

There are even more ways your site can be service oriented.

Is your one-sheet viewable and/or downloadable from your site? These help others sell you in their committee and management meetings. Offering these as PDF files insures the widest audience for your materials.

Is there a form or questionnaire to fill out for parties interested in retaining you for their events or programs?

Alternately, is there an easy way to e-mail, fax or call you to ascertain your fees, availability and fit for a prospective client's program? Most speakers insure this contact information is on all pages of their website. Remember, you want to make it easy for clients to engage you. Many have a calendar so prospects can immediately determine if the speaker is even available on the date in question.

Are high and low resolution photographs of you available for downloading? These help others promote you prior to your engagements. Whenever they need them, the photos are already available for downloading.

Is your pre-event questionnaire or survey downloadable? This shows your foresight, interest in customizing and professionalism. It also orients others to the relevant issues they may not even be aware of.

Finally, as websites become more labyrinthine, does your site have a site map or search engine? Consider the merits of one or both.

They're Your Customer, Even Before You're Hired

Customer service means more than giving customers what they want. It includes anticipating what they might want, helping them understand what they do — and don't — want.

A number of speakers devote web space to tips sheets for how to pick the right speaker or what questions to ask when shopping for speakers. Remember, the goal isn't to convert every inquiry into an engagement for you, it's to help the seeking party make the best decision for their event, which may or may not mean hiring you every time. A service-oriented speaker can guide the prospective party through the process with care and concern. In doing so, you've established some trust and credibility.

Walk Your Talk

Your prompt attention to the needs of meeting planners and other decision makers demonstrates your professionalism. When customers ask CSP, CPAE and Cavett award winner Patricia Fripp for a video, audio, or a written description of her presentations, she responds in three words: "consider it done!" Then she and her wonderful assistants like Maria make sure it *is* done. The old adage applies just as much to us as other professionals: under-promise and over-deliver.

Having It Your Way Too

Service-oriented speakers let those who hire them know in advance how best to set up their rooms: location of stage, microphones, tables, screens, flip charts, projectors, etc. They have created a floor plan explaining where they need the aisles, audience members, etc. By sharing this in advance planners are oriented to the issues of most importance to speakers and are thus better able to insure a successful event by attending to these details

Your Speaker Introduction

By having your official introduction available in advance and easy to read, your client can obtain, rehearse and even memorize this important precursor to your presentation. Make yours easy to read: using big print (but not ALL CAPS, which are harder to read), short sentences, plenty of white space, and phonetic spelling for any difficult or hard to pronounce words or names. Avail yourself to work with your introducer, who may be new to this sort of speaking, prior to the gig, to help them rehearse and gain confidence. Many introductions have stage notes in parentheses, instructing the reader when and where to pause, laugh, deadpan, smile or otherwise gesture.

Wear Many Hats

While the great Patricia Fripp does this too, I'm actually referring to the reality that there are many ways you can help clients, in addition to the time you are on stage. Let them know that when they hire you they are hiring a professional that will partner with them on a successful event, beyond just your part in it.

When I work with a client I help them clarify their overall goals for their event. I ask them questions they may not have thought about, or articulated to others yet. This helps them focus. What is the overall theme? How else can we support this theme? What else can you do to reinforce this theme?

When I am hired I let clients know I am available before and after my presentation for additional responsibilities: management briefings, coaching sessions, special presentations, media interviews, photo shoots, and more. I always offer to pen a follow-

up article for their newsletter, subscribe their employees to my free e-zine, or post supplemental information to their website or mine.

And the Survey Says...

As professionals we should always seek feedback. I customarily contact the meeting planner or hiring contact after my presentation to debrief. The insights revealed help both parties.

Last Impressions

I approach every new client with the intention of their being my client for life. Toward that end, I not only strive to make a great first impression...I make sure the last impression after each presentation of mine is memorable. Whether I send a thank you note, gift, or schedule a follow-up lunch, I insure the aftertaste is sweet, and you can too!

When you recognize your ability to deliver great customer service to your clients you will delight in finding new and creative ways to do so. Then you too can say you're truly at their service!

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CRAIG HARRISON began delivering great customer service when he went door-to-door in his Berkeley CA neighborhood selling Used Jokes to put smiles on the faces of his customers. Now he makes communication and customer service fun and easy for his clients.

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