

## **Do You Over Promise and Under Deliver?**

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A new client recently admitted to me sheepishly that she often didn't get to complete a customer's work until the customer called to see if it was ready. I admired her honesty if not her time management skills.

I've had times in my past sales career when my work load got so out of control I worked in a similar fashion - on the priority of the moment. This method of work gives real meaning to the saying "The squeaky wheel gets oiled."

Recently I sent some chairs out to be reupholstered. The fellow who picked them up said they would be done by the end of June. On July 15th they still had not arrived. I'd been calling about them since July 1st. The person who answered the phone said that the upholstery work had been completed but the painting was not.

We all have had times when we have promised something to a client or customer only to have life happen and we miss the date. When it is more routine than we care to admit however it would be best to examine our way of working so that we can find a solution to the problem.

"Promise Little, Deliver Everything" is the tenth *Principle of Attraction* in Thomas Leonard's book *The Portable Coach*.

"Every step of the way, I made a point to under promise and over deliver. In the long run, that's the only way to ensure security in any job." says Howard Schulz CEO of Starbucks Coffee in his book *Pour Your Heart Into It*. "Under promising and over delivering" it is a way of work that is so much easier said than done.

When a customer asks, "When will that be ready?" What is your response? If the customer doesn't ask, do you promise something anyway or just let the work go to the bottom of the pile?

When I was sales professional I knew my customers always wanted their telephone system as soon as they ordered it! I had to quote a reasonable time for me to get the order in and the factory to deliver the product. Some of the ordering work I did myself and other parts of the order I needed others to do. Everyone had to adhere to a schedule to get the job done on time.

Even with the best of intentions this system sometimes doesn't work because the unexpected happens. According to the upholsterer the painter needed to put more coats of paint on the frame than he originally thought he would. The problem was that they told me this on July 15th not on June 30th so I had two weeks to feel frustrated and angry.

Most business owners don't intend to disappoint customers. Sometimes it is the unexpected that gets in the way. Other times it is our inability to grasp all the other priorities we have and to see how this particular job fits into our work schedule. Having a way to regularly review what is outstanding and what the priorities are for the day, week and month helps to get realistic about what can be finished and what cannot.

If however you wait until the customer calls to do the work, you are using a very stressful and exhausting method. If you have a lot of work that you manage this way, you are constantly under the gun to get something done for someone. Receiving calls from angry customers will be unpleasant. It is a recipe for disaster for your business and burnout for you!

Life will be so much easier if you start using a good time management process. Your SCORE counselor can help you to incorporate good time management skills into your work environment in order to ease the burden.

Take Action:

1. Take stock of your work habits. Do you under promise and over deliver? Where are you doing the reverse? What can you do about it?
2. How do you review your work load? Do you read your mission/vision weekly so you are clear on your goals? Do you do a weekly review of your priorities? Do you proactively call customers whose work will be delayed?
3. How do you decide the date by which you can promise to deliver? Do you co-ordinate it with other people's schedules? Are you good at forecasting and then delivering?
4. Need some help with time management? Call SCORE for an appointment.

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