

### 'Can-Do' Attitudes Go a Long Way in Business

You've probably heard the catch-cry of the modern day household a thousand times - "this year is even busier than the last".

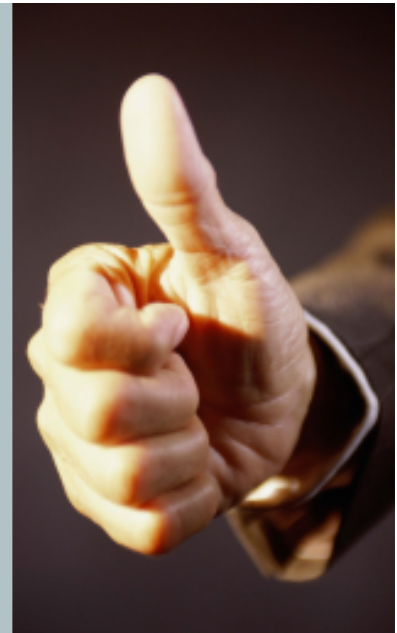
No doubt theories abound on why the modern family feels more and more burdened, but whatever the reason, 'busyness' and stressfulness do seem to hit us a little bit harder every year.

And every year people are looking for more convenient ways of running their lives.

Here's where the small business comes in. If you've got a 'can-do' attitude to business, you'll be more likely to attract the attention of 'convenience-seeking' customers.

The customer wants to hear you say: "Yes, we can do that".

- Can you deliver this afternoon?
- Can you locate the part for my car and have it fixed by tomorrow?
- I like the colour but the size is wrong, can you make me a new one?
- My drains are blocked, can you come this morning?



"Yes, we can do that." You can probably hear the relief in the customer's voice. You have just solved a big problem for them. They love you already. Just make sure you deliver what you've promised.

Obviously, you simply may not be able to stretch to the customer's demands and deliver that afternoon, especially if you're relying on other companies along the way.

But don't simply say 'no' because that's not the way you usually do things, or because it's going to take too long to organise. Instead, carry with you the positive attitude that anything is possible.

### Plan to improve your business

When you set aside time for business planning, these are the issues you need to be addressing. How can I make life easier and more convenient for my customers? What changes can be made here, time-savings made there?

Try to be on the front foot by offering an improved service to your customers before they've even thought of it themselves.

For example, you might consider sourcing a new product for a particular customer just so they can have their total order supplied by you. This would be far more convenient to the customer than having to order the same products from several different suppliers.

Or, if a small component of an overall sale deal is not readily available, could you go out of your way to purchase that component from another retailer or wholesaler? Ideally you don't want to let the customer walk away just because you can't supply a small component of their overall purchase.

This 'can-do' business attitude is likely to become very important in the future as more and more big businesses look to reduce the number of suppliers with whom they deal.

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## Tell customers how you can help them

Don't assume the customer knows everything about the services you offer. It's up to you to keep your customers informed of and up-to-date with new developments.

Perhaps you send out a regular newsletter, or have a system of calling, emailing or texting specific customers. If you can offer a new or improved service or product, tell your customers - chances are they'll be on the lookout for more convenient ways of doing business.

## Next Steps

### Plan to step-up your 'can-do' attitude

**Consider making slight changes** - are you getting requests from customers that you can't fulfil? For example, "can you deliver tomorrow?" What has to happen before you could respond positively to the request?

**Plan to improve** - during business planning sessions keep thinking about how you can improve service to your customers. For example, can you source new products for them so they can conveniently do business with one supplier? Offer to them before they even ask.

**Tell customers** - don't think the customer knows all about your business and the range of products and services you offer. Set up a system to keep them up-to-date with developments.

**Train staff** - staff need the 'can-do' attitude too but they also need to know what requests they can agree to and which ones need your input.



## Converting Telephone Enquiries into Sales

A ringing telephone can be intrusive to anyone's ears, but especially if you're deep in conversation with a customer.

Yet, while you do need to give face-to-face customers your full attention, don't overlook the potential sale on the other end of the telephone.

In fact it's well worth the effort to determine the percentage of phone enquiries your business receives that are converted into sales on a daily basis. Improving the conversion rate is something all staff can aim for.

Developing a system for answering telephone enquiries is key to improving the conversion rate.

### Twofold Approach

What you're trying to do is twofold. Firstly you want to determine a response that will either encourage the potential customer to make a sale over the phone, or, follow up with another call or visit to the business premises at a later date.

The second reason for having a system in place is to ensure everyone in the business is saying the same thing to potential customers. If you know what works over the phone, make sure everyone else in the team knows it too.

One way to create the system is to categorise the different types of telephone enquiries your business receives, then work out an appropriate reply for each enquiry.

With a little work on the wording the team member taking the call could do a lot more than simply deal with the initial enquiry. By prompting the potential customer to divulge more about their needs, for example, the team member may be able to suggest a different model or an entirely different product or service.

It's all about communicating, and the more you understand about a customer's needs, the more easily you will be able to help them solve their purchasing dilemmas.



## Don't Take Customers for Granted

1. Rather than just waiting for the customers to come to you, actively work to give customers what they want. This might take some research.
2. Customers are looking for a different sort of experience. If your business does not supply it then your competitors or some big business will try.
3. The secret of success for a small business operator is to establish the systems, train staff, develop a marketing strategy and then supply the customers with excellent service.
4. Don't be afraid if you appear different to your competitors. Deliberately try to differentiate your business, so your customers will know and recognise you and be enthusiastic referrers of their friends and associates.

## Check It Out Before Buying a Franchise

Fancy yourself in a sports shop, a food outlet or an automotive service? Franchise opportunities abound in New Zealand, but before buying into one, it pays to do your homework.

Thousands of people run highly successful franchise businesses, thanks to their business acumen and enthusiasm and the success of the brand behind them. But not all of them turn out to be so lucrative or successful.

If you're thinking about franchising you need to be sure it's the right thing for you. Appropriate expectations are critical. The *New Zealand Franchisee's Guide* (NZFG) says it's important to remember that rather than 'owning' the business, you have actually purchased 'the right to use a system (franchise) to transact business'.



### What's the attraction?

For many people franchising offers a more secure option than starting up a new business from scratch. It allows you to operate an independent business under the banner of an already established business.

People buy into franchising because, according to the *NZFG*, "they buy the experience and the 'formula' from the franchisor that minimise the risks and increase their chance of success."

When you consider the high number of new business start-ups that do not survive past the first few years, franchising definitely comes up trumps for reducing the difficulties in the early stages.

But that extensive support behind you also brings its drawbacks and as a business option, it's definitely not for everyone.

As part of the franchise 'family', you are obliged to adhere to the systems already put in place by the franchisor.

*Be sure to read each article with the mindset "How this could apply to our business". Thinking of it that way will guarantee that you get value. Also make copies for each team member. To really make sure something positive happens, work with your business development specialists to talk your team through ideas.*

*“The most believable, most effective, and cheapest advertising a service provider can have is positive unsolicited word-of-mouth recommendations made by satisfied customers to other people.”*

*“Customer Service from Hell!” by Phil Slater.*

## Recipe for Success

This is the nature of business format franchising and the very reason why it works so well - the market testing, the evaluation, and the mistakes have already been made. By the time you, and those before you, open up a new outlet, the recipe for success has already been written.

The ongoing success of the business, as well as the integrity of the brand, relies on franchisees following the ‘proven formula’.

Before entering into a franchise agreement, you need to get professional advice from your lawyer, accountant and banker. They too should have experience in dealing with franchises.

Check the reputation and track record of the franchisor very carefully. Make sure the product will have longevity in the market and plenty of detail is provided in contracts. Consider the fee structure and assess what ongoing support you will get from the franchisor.



Every franchise opportunity operates slightly differently and initial fees can range from \$5,000 to \$1,000,000.

It's also important to speak to other franchisees and assess honestly your own reasons for wanting to buy into a franchise.

See below for details of important websites. Both offer a wealth of information. For example, at [www.franchise.co.nz](http://www.franchise.co.nz), you'll find an article listing 200 questions you need to ask a franchisor before signing anything. Check them out.

## More Info on Franchises

- The *New Zealand Franchisee's Guide*, published by the Franchise Association of New Zealand
- *Franchise New Zealand* magazine
- The Franchising *Code of Practice* and *Code of Ethics*
- websites: [www.franchiseassociation.co.nz](http://www.franchiseassociation.co.nz); [www.franchise.co.nz](http://www.franchise.co.nz)

### An important Message

*While every effort has been made to provide valuable, useful information in this publication, this firm and any related suppliers or associated companies accept no responsibility or any form of liability from reliance upon or use of its contents. Any suggestions should be considered carefully within your own particular circumstances, as they are intended as general information only.*

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