

Sweating the Small Stuff

A few weeks ago John, an old client, called with a curious question, "Do you do renovations?" John has a great sense of humor and so I considered before I answered him. "Good to hear from you John, but I think you got our contact information messed up," I warily suggested.

John laughed and said he was almost serious. He explained that he had asked a close friend of his who is a financial advisor to let him, John, pay for a consultation with us. John said it was an "office warming" gift for his friend Paul's new office.

Paul's receptionist gave us a nice "Good Morning!" then followed with, "Well actually it's not so nice is it? This would be a great time to be in Florida, or someplace else where it doesn't snow."

Paul swept into the reception area with a mug in hand, greeted us warmly and asked if we wanted coffee. He then turned to his receptionist and said, "This stuff is terrible, would you please make us a fresh pot."

Paul had done a spectacular job fashioning a warm, inviting space that radiated success and competency. He gave us the full tour of what he proudly announced was a \$150K renovation of the reception area and offices. It was stunning. He also talked about the branding company he hired to redo his logo and website.

His own office had sports memorabilia on the walls and shelf space. He saw me looking at a framed baseball jersey and said, "Of course if he keeps playing like he did last year, I may have to send his jersey to the bottom drawer."

We sat and Paul explained, "I want my prospective clients to see and feel that they can't do any better than to hire us. In designing our office I wanted every detail to reflect our quality. John likes you guys and told me you can help us add to our clients' sense of quality - what can you do for us?"

If you've worked with us, or had us present our 'Positive Attitude, Positive Bottom Line' seminar to your team you can guess one thing we talked about. Paul was watching the details but ignoring the small stuff - the small talk.

His receptionist's greeting ended with a typical, but negative tag line about the weather. He assumed that commiserating about the baseball season was a positive connection with clients.

Later, during the meeting, he took a client phone call and ended it with a joking reference to how bad the unemployment rate was, "At least you're not trying to find a job in this mess."

There are real bottom-line effects from the mood of the messages you and your team

send. For the next day or so, listen to your team's "automatic" greetings and small talk. You're likely to discover mostly low grade complaining about the weather, the state of the world or a sports team, etc. Yet we know that positive greetings, upbeat small talk and a focus on what's going right will position your clients for cooperation, agreement and resilience.

Every single interaction you have with your clients or prospective clients is an opportunity to help or hurt the image you are working hard to create. We encourage you to continue thinking carefully about the "big stuff" like your office space, logo design, your website... But be careful; don't overlook the less obvious opportunities to improve the experience of your clients, their readiness to cooperate and your bottom line.

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."---Maya Angelou

Want other ideas than can improve your team's performance? We evaluate, train and support professional teams who want their quality to be second to none. Give us a call to discuss your goals and aspirations.