

'Make your life worth living as your living is being made'

by Catherine DeVrye

Think back on people, outside immediate family and friends, who have contributed in some way, large or small, to making your life more pleasant. As you're remembering, it's likely that they gave you something and unlikely that what they gave was anything material. It's more probable that they gave you laughter, a shoulder to cry on, a boost in self-confidence, or insight into yourself or others. They gave of their time and of their love, with all its many manifestations.

It could have been an encouraging teacher, a boss who believed in you, an acquaintance who you confided in, a maiden aunt who expanded your horizons, a colleague who willingly helped on a project, even though it wasn't their job to do so.

It could have even been a complete stranger- a burly truck driver who, in spite of a tight schedule, stops to change a tire of a stranded motorist; an insurance agent who calls a widow long after her husband's death, just to check she's OK. It could be a mobile phone dealer who loans his own phone to a small businessman, who relies on communication to survive, or a manager who arranges childcare for a single mother in need of an operation.

It's the chemist who delivers a prescription to a pensioner after hours at no charge, the florist who, when discovering the patient has left hospital early, takes the extra step to deliver the bouquet to their home.

After all, none of us are really in the transport, insurance, retail or healthcare business. We're all in the people business! And, it's proven that other people like to buy goods and services from those they like. In every one of the instances mentioned, repeat business flowed to the person who went that little bit extra. By helping others, we do help ourselves, even if it's just feeling better about ourselves. As Zig Zigler says:

'If you help enough other people get what they want, you'll get what you want.'

When we think of helping occupations, our minds traditionally race to the caring professions of nursing, social work and emergency workers. But every single job has the capacity to combine the head and the heart to feel we're making a difference to both our own pocketbooks and filling pockets of need in others through random acts of kindness and beauty.

Recently, after a five-hour flight, I arrived at a hotel, feeling sick and with no voice. As I was supposed to speak to 400 real estate agents at a conference the next day, this was indeed a predicament. At check-in, the receptionist pleasantly started her standard greeting of the facilities the hotel had to offer but I cut her short and said I wasn't well and simply wanted to go to my room as soon as possible. After quickly unpacking and showering, I was about to curl up in bed, feeling sorry for myself away from home, when there was an unexpected knock at the door.

"Room service" the cheery voice echoed.

Cheerfulness was not what I needed, and I informed him that I hadn't ordered room service.

"Yes, Ms DeVrye, we know you haven't ordered room service but we also know that you're not feeling well so we have some hot lemon and honey with out compliments."

Sure enough, on a silver tray, was exactly what I would have liked if I'd been at home. There was also a hand written note from the chef offering to make chicken soup for dinner and another note from the concierge, with a few vitamin C tablets and offering to go the chemist for any additional medication I may require.

You can imagine my amazement. I spend about 80 nights per year in 5 star hotels and know that sort of service isn't standard. It's not contained in anyone's job description but because the receptionist put herself in my shoes, she co-ordinated with the others to deliver outstanding service. And, of course, any traveler would remember that even long after they'd forgotten how much marble was in the foyer!

My voice marginally restored the next day, I addressed the realtors on customer service and gave this as an example of going that extra mile and truly putting yourself in the shoes of the customer. I'm pleased to report that the real estate company went on to adopt "hot lemon & honey" service as their theme. I'd arranged with the manager of the hotel to have the receptionist present so she could hear my praise. When I spoke with her at checkout, she said she was a little embarrassed with the spontaneous applause from the audience and hadn't expected any acclaim, saying:

"To know that you were feeling better, made me feel better about my day." By going that little extra, she gained extra satisfaction for herself."

Remember this receptionist, and all the other folks mentioned in this article, when you get up and head off to work each day. Because, in spite of the frustrations we all experience in our daily tasks, isn't it helpful to remember that we truly can

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Catherine DeVrye, Australian Executive Woman of the Year, is a #1 best selling author of *Good Service is Good Business* and global speaker on service quality and change. This is an extract from her book *'Hot Lemon & Honey-Reflections for Success in Times of Change*.