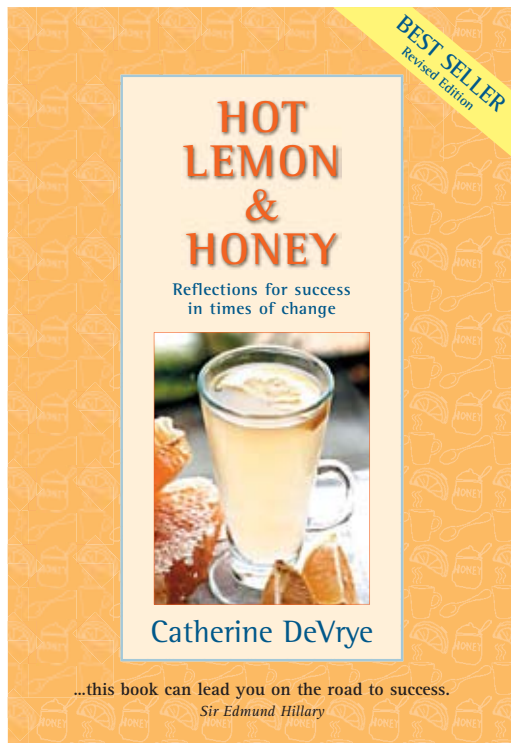




Chapter 3

Excerpt from
Hot Lemon & Honey

Written by
Catherine DeVrye



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First published in 2000 and reprinted 2000 by
Allen & Unwin

Reprinted 2002 by Everest Press. Revised edition 2004

Reprinted 2006, 2007

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National Library of Australia

Cataloguing-in-Publication entry:

DeVrye, Catherine.

Hot lemon and honey: reflections for success in
times of change.

ISBN 0 9580110 2 8.

ISBN-13 978 0 9580110 2 0.

1. Self-actualization (Psychology). 2. Motivation
(Psychology). 3. Conduct of life. 4. Quality of work
life. 5. Figures of speech. I. Title.

158.1

Set in 10/13 pt Rotis Serif

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‘Customers don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.’

Gerhard Gshwandter



Most organisations espouse customer care without truly appreciating what it really means.

True customer care goes beyond the lip service paid to customer service. It goes beyond product knowledge and politeness. It goes beyond procedures and quality programs. That’s not to say that these aren’t important ingredients in an overall customer strategy, but the icing on the cake, so to speak, is the genuine care factor. And I don’t mean the sickly sweet ‘Have a nice day’ patter.

Caring encompasses the intellect and the emotion, the head and the heart. It can’t be learned in any training manual, yet it is something we’ve been taught all our lives. Remember when your grandmother or kindly aunt used to say:

‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.’



This simple Golden Rule can likewise be worth gold to your business. It's a simple customer service maxim and one that a hotel in Perth, Western Australia, certainly practises. I'd arrived at check-in, jet-lagged, with a terrible cold and no voice. As I was supposed to speak to 200 real estate agents the next morning, this was indeed a predicament.

The receptionist pleasantly started her standard greeting, telling me about the pool, golf course, restaurants, etc. Rather impatient to get to bed, I ignored the information and curtly informed her that I simply wanted my key. Reaching my room, I quickly unpacked, had a hot shower and was about to curl up in bed when there was an unexpected knock on the door.

'Room service,' the cheery voice echoed.

Cheerfulness was not what I wanted at that point in time so I tersely informed him that I hadn't ordered room service.

'Yes, we know you haven't, Ms DeVrye. But we also know you're not feeling well so have prepared some hot lemon and honey with our compliments.'

Sure enough, on a silver tray, was exactly what I would have liked if I'd been at home. I sheepishly thanked him as he handed me the tray, which also had some vitamin C and a note from the chef, offering to make anything special I would like for dinner, even if it didn't appear on the menu. What's more, there was another note from the concierge, offering to have medication delivered from a 24-hour chemist.

I felt better already! To think that someone had taken the time to show some genuine care to a stranger in the usually impersonal environment of a hotel, so far from home. The hotel didn't have the best amenities I'd seen in my travels, but, in spending over 70 nights per year in hotels, never have I experienced such heartwarming customer care. And long after I'd forget the marble in the foyer or designer shampoo bottles, I'd always remember the outstanding customer care.

That genuine care wasn't a result of any formal process in their operational procedure manual, but rather a result of the receptionist putting herself in the shoes of a guest and imagining how she would like to be treated if she was in a similar situation.

As soon as she realised I was ill, she no longer tried to impress me with the range of facilities and services. She truly did impress me by coordinating with her colleagues to demonstrate true customer care—by providing hot lemon and honey service straight from the heart!

My voice marginally restored the next day, I addressed the realtors on customer service, using this real-time example of true care. Coincidentally, their training manager had had a similar experience in a New Zealand hotel and as an innovative leader, she suggested that the company adopt 'Hot Lemon and Honey Service' as their theme for the conference and the year, which I'm pleased to report resulted in record sales. Hot lemon and honey . . . the sort of

natural nurturing of customers which pays bottom-line dividends once you realise that:

'Customers don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.'



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Catherine DeVrye is also the author of the #1 best seller *Good Service is Good Business* and 5 other successful books. A former IBM executive and past winner of the Australian Executive Woman of the year award, DeVrye has spoken on five continents to a wide array of audiences from small business and Fortune 500 companies to government organisations and Olympic athletes. She has cycled over the Andes, climbed Mt Kilimanjaro and was honored to carry the Olympic torch on the day of the opening ceremony of the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

ISBN 0-9580110-2-8



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