



# 7 service habits

TO BOOST YOUR BOTTOM LINE

EDITORIAL | JOE TAKASH

Kathryn walked into a prospective client's office with low expectations of winning.

In her mind, she knew the chance of her small marketing firm getting the nod for such a lucrative contract over her bigger, more established competitors was low.

When the senior vice president greeted her, Kathryn was pleasant but her enthusiasm and confidence level could be aptly described as "low voltage."

The meeting wasn't terrible, but Kathryn was correct — it wasn't going to win her firm a rainmaking contract. And it didn't. Poor Kathryn.



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**Question:** What do the weather and how old you are have in common?

**Answer:** You have no control over either.

**Question:** What are some things you can control?

**Answer:** Every winning service behavior you're about to read. If you apply them with passion and consistency, your business results will unequivocally improve, and swiftly at that.

**Step 1: Make a Great First Impression**

It sounds academic, but start paying attention to how people greet you. Do they smile at you? Do they convey warmth and enthusiasm? Do they ask questions and show interest in you? ABC in sales means "Always Be Closing." Bunk! Try ABO: "Always Be Opening." This is what sets the tone for profitable relationships.

**Winning Behaviors:** A smile, a firm, friendly handshake and direct and pleasant eye contact go a long way. Motivational pioneer Earl Nightingale said, "Treat every person you meet like he or she is the most important person on earth, because to that person, they are." Right on Earl.

**Step 2: Be a Name-Learning Machine**

When I ask seminar participants, "How are you at remembering people's names: a) Fantastic? b) Not-so-hot? c) Embarrassingly bad?" I'm still amazed that more than 90% check off b or c. Fact: Names mean money in business. They create a comfortable atmosphere, make people feel great. Oh, and they are a competitive advantage.

**Winning Behaviors:** Ask people's names. When you forget immediately, (which we all do), ask again. Then create associations like "Donna from Detroit" or "Stan the man." Write names down. Use them while speaking to people. Most of all, practice the name game everywhere. You'll get in great name shape.

**Step 3: Be a Fantastic Listener**

Most people are lousy listeners. Sound negative? Sorry, but it's true. Think of three exceptional listeners, and I'll bet it takes a while. Yet, listening is at the top for qualities that make up great leaders, salespeople, coaches, teachers and business owners.

**Winning Behaviors:** Ask open-ended questions. Practice silence. Do not interrupt or finish peoples' sentences. Show nonverbal attentiveness. Paraphrase what others said to show respect and gain accurate understanding. Show emotional support and empathy by trying to understand their perspective. Most of all, be fully engaged. Excellent listening is not just smart business, it says a lot about your character.

**Step 4: Create Common Ground**

This is when you and others can relate to each other because of a shared interest or experience. When people have things in common, seeds of trust are planted, friendliness and comfort are accelerated, and all this opens the floodgate for many business opportunities.

**Winning Behaviors:** Get great at asking questions that lead to sharing information like, "So John, where are you from originally?" "Did you do anything fun last weekend?" "Anything exciting you're looking forward to?" By learning about people beyond the workplace, you discover a whole world that they are passionate about, much of which you can relate to or make a link. Make these questions habits and you'll soon be standing tall on common ground.

**Step 5: Show Constant Appreciation**

The godfather of psychology, William James, said, "The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated." We all love to be recognized. It feeds our spirit and soul. It motivates us to perform better and show loyalty to those who pay us kudos.

**Winning Behaviors:** Send thank-you cards every week. Fact: If you don't send handwritten thank-you notes to customers or clients who give you business (regularly), you are losing money. Taking time to show gratitude is about

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class on a personal level, and it creates a bonding that shows concern on a professional level. Whether you appreciate by pen, by phone or in person, make it a habit. People like to do business with people they like.

## Step 6: Apologize and Admit Fault

Every long-term relationship is challenged with times of conflict and tension. Yet, the identifying marker of how those relationships progress depends on how you respond to that adversity.

**Winning Behaviors:** Be willing to say, “I’m sorry that I spoke to you like that” or “Team, before we start this meeting, I need to admit fault over how I handled a client situation.” Remember, your best relationships are not built. They are rebuilt.

## Step 7: Be Positively Contagious

Why is that you can be wide awake, but when you see someone yawn, you yawn? Just writing “yawn” right now makes

me want to yawn. You’re probably yawning too — stop it. Human actions are contagious, so why not be positively contagious? This attracts coworkers and builds morale; it connects with clients and builds business.

**Winning behaviors:** Use positive words, choose to look for the best in others, walk with confidence, speak with a genuine passion and treat people with dignity.

If Kathryn viewed her marketing firm as every bit as powerful as her larger competitors, and if she opted to see herself and the benefits she could bring any prospect as breakthrough value, how do you think her interview would have turned out?

Realistically, one never knows, but perhaps she should have remembered: “People do not judge you by what you think or feel, only by what you say and do.”

**Your behaviors are what count most. Play to win.** 