

February 2024

By Richard John Potton, Managing Director – Hoed Research - <https://www.hoed.co.nz/>

Hospitableness - How to Keep Your Customers Coming Back!

After a recent restaurant experience that left me wanting, I got thinking about the difference between 'customer service' and what it is to go above and beyond, and why it is so essential for long-term business success.

Today, we assume Customer Service to be a given (the bare minimum).

It is what you would expect to have when making a product purchase or paying for a restaurant meal, for example. But it's no longer enough to 'captivate' your attention.

At the restaurant we recently ate at, it was the usual greeting at the door, do we have a booking, taking us to a table, handing us a menu, taking our order, and paying the bill. Rinse and repeat!



But being hospitable is what keeps a customer coming back. And what does that look like?

It is that feeling of being special, of being treated like another human being, by a human being. The warm greeting, the banter, the chat, the jokes, as you would with family and friends. Not that feeling of being just another transaction to make up the numbers.

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There is a shift to technologising the customer journey. Technology is great and a wonderful enabler, particularly in the service industry. But it should not replace the human element entirely. What technology provides is an opportunity to enhance our hospitality, not reduce it. It's making the effort to relate at a personal level, that matters.

Hospitality is about making you feel at home, part of the family, a friend, a colleague, another wonderful human being.

And when a customer feels this way, the connection to you and your business will be far deeper, and they will keep coming back.

But what is the trick to being hospitable?

It is in the way we listen and understand – by showing an interest.

In a world where everyone is vying to be the most interesting, be the one who is interested.

Sometimes this may feel difficult and uncomfortable, especially in a service or customer-facing environment. But it will instantly set you apart.

- Show a genuine interest in the other person or persons.
- Be curious about people.
- Ask genuine questions and actively listen to their response.
- Offer genuine solutions or suggestions that will resonate with the other person.
- Present a genuine warmth and friendliness.
- Respect opposing viewpoints.

Whenever you interact with your clients or customers, take the opportunity to get to know them.

Not only will this set you apart from the competition doing the bare minimum. It will add that valuable human element to your business that technology will never replace.