

BACKGROUND ON BUSINESS

Good Communication Skills and Services Can Boost Sales

by June Applegate

(NAPS)—Small business owner Linda Denny has sold millions of dollars' worth of insurance products and created innovative sales programs for several major corporations.



Applegate: "She attributes much of her success to being an excellent communicator and using the telephone to maximize her relationship with clients. She has one great idea, that anyone can easily incorporate into a daily routine."

"I take notes on every phone call I make or accept," said Denny, who recently established an Arlington, Va.-based consulting firm that helps companies better understand the powerful women's market. "To free my hands for note-taking, I attach a headset to my office phone. When I'm out and about, I use a headset for my Sprint wireless phone. With the headset, it's easy to take notes about what we are discussing during the conversation."

Denny said she got into the habit of taking notes on the phone when she was working as a compliance officer for a major insurance company. She said her telephone call journals (she uses stenography pads) have been extremely helpful when it comes to following up with clients. She also uses the notes to book future appointments, keep track of commitments made during the call and to meet deadlines.

Denny and other successful small business owners I've met understand that no matter how small their business is, they can appear much bigger to clients if they have the right communications services.

For example:

- An affordable Web site gives your business a "storefront" to the "sprink" 24 hours a day in cyberspace. (Sprint and DellNet can provide reliable hosting services at competitive rates for small businesses.)

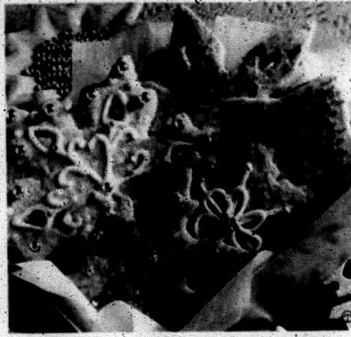
- A toll-free number encourages clients or customers to call your company at no charge to them. You can order several toll-free numbers, using one or two to track response to advertising or marketing promotions and others for employees to call the office.

- The right long-distance plan can make it affordable for you and your employees to make outbound sales calls and return calls promptly to improve customer service. Along with flat per-minute rates, look for plans that offer the flexibility to add or delete options as your business grows or changes.

No matter what company you rely on for phone service, be sure to order enough lines to handle a surge in call volume. Test out the old answering machine and sign up for a reliable voicemail system. Change your outgoing greeting frequently to keep customers updated on your schedule. Offer an after-hours number for emergencies or forward your office calls to your home.

"When you leave a voicemail message, be sure to speak slowly and repeat your phone number twice," advises Denny. "Say it slowly and say it twice. Nothing is more frustrating than getting an important call that you can't return because you don't know how to reach the person."

June Applegate is author of 201 Great Ideas for Your Small Business, and founder of www.SBTV.com (Small Business TV), a multimedia Web site providing free resources for business owners. For more great ideas, visit www.sprint.com/ideas21.



Trim The Tree With Snowflake Cookies

(NAPS)—Cookie baking is one holiday tradition that most of us are reluctant to give up, even if it means making just one special cookie. Since kids love to help with holiday projects, plan now to set aside one weekend afternoon and bake beautiful snowflake-shaped cookies that can be used as tree ornaments or as gifts for favorite teachers.

Sparkling Snowflake Cookies were developed in the Quaker Kitchens to be extra-easy. A packaged cake mix limits the number of ingredients needed to five, and these are mixed by hand in a single bowl. Rolled out as naturally nutty flavor to these buttery cookies.

SPARKLING SNOWFLAKE COOKIES

About 3 1/2 Dozen

- 1 pkg. (18.25 oz.) white cake mix
- 1/2 pound (3 sticks) butter, softened
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 cups Quaker oats (quick or old-fashioned, uncooked)

Assorted sugars, candy sprinkles, decorator icing

Heat oven to 350°F. In large bowl, combine half the dry cake mix with butter, egg and vanilla; mix thoroughly with large spoon. Stir in remaining cake mix and oats; mix well. Divide dough in half. On well-floured surface using a well-floured rolling pin, roll each half 1/4 to 1/2-inch thick. Cut dough with 3-inch snowflake or other large holiday cookie cutter. Place about 1-inch apart on ungreased cookie sheets. Sprinkle with sugar, if desired. For ornaments, poke a hole at the top of each cookie with drinking straw. (Repeat immediately after baking if hole closes.) Bake 8 to 9 minutes or just until set (centers may still be soft). Carefully remove off wire rack; cool completely. Decorate unsugared cookies with frosting and sugar or candy sprinkles.

Unwrapping Smart Gifts For Kids

(NAPS)—If you're looking for smart ideas for children, you may want to research educational software, toys or videos. They make terrific gifts because they're fun and educational, and can spark a lifelong love of learning.

Children from babyhood through preschool age can learn from new software featuring characters from the beloved TV show Sesame Street. For over 30 years, Sesame Workshop (the creators of Sesame Street) has been a leader in educational programming. In fact, the non-profit group is the single largest educator of children in the world.

New Sesame Street software includes Sesame Street Toddler, Sesame Street Preschool and Sesame Street Baby. Each includes games and activities hosted by the familiar Muppet characters, as well as original songs and video clips from the TV show. Based on years of research on how kids learn, the software teaches basic skills from letter recognition and simple math to recognizing colors and shapes.

Children can also learn from two other software products inspired by Sesame Workshop-produced TV shows. In Dragon Tales: Dragon Fray-Jamboree, the lovable dragons from the top-rated preschool show in America invite children ages three to six to join

Fun and learning for kids with Sesame Street's Big Bird.

them for adventures in Dragon Land. The software challenges children to use critical thinking and social skills as they search for the Dragon Fray, who have wandered off to play.

In Sesame Street Monster Clubhouse, children have fun while dancing, singing and laughing with the lovable monsters from this popular Sesame Street segment. Kids will build critical thinking skills and stretch their creativity as they join the zany monsters in the clubhouse. For more information on these Sesame Workshop CD-ROMs, visit www.encyclopedia.com.



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For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
John 3:16

Our thanks for the many kindnesses you've shown us through the year. We join with you in praying for a world filled with peace and joy.

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Trish Harmon, Christine Taylor, Shirley Cromer,
Sandy Bowles, Glenna Mink, Lisa Hayes,
Scott Barnes, Renee Spoonamore

Good Days & Nights

We're Checking It Twice...

And you're at the top of the list of people we'd like to thank this year!
It's always a pleasure seeing you.

Margie and Dr. Lee Cain with Rachel Kim McFerron, Leda Taylor, Sheila Whitehead, and Dr. Margena Osborne.
Not pictured - Terri Lynne Abney

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