



# SkillSharpener Web Extra

## Resolution: Have a more positive attitude!

**You've probably got a list of performance improvement goals — things like sharpening your listening or negotiating skills, finding new ways to combat stress, and improving your customer satisfaction rating. But if having a more positive attitude isn't on your list, it should be, says JoAnna Brandi, a customer service consultant.**

"If it's our responsibility to consistently deliver a positive customer experience, then we must find ways to stay positive ourselves," says Brandi. She adds that it's not as easy as you might think.

"Take a look at the environment in your office and the internal environment in your head," Brandi says. "What types of signs do you have around the office and in your work area? Do you have words of inspiration about vision, about service, or about teamwork and caring? Or are you subliminally sabotaging yourself with negative, sarcastic signs and mottos? Messages like, 'You want it when?' Or, 'Poor planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part.'"

### Create a positive thinking zone

There's enough negativity in the world, from the nightly news to entertainment programs that trade on sarcasm and cynicism, says Brandi. On top of that, there are workplace environments where there's a premium on customer satisfaction but very little thought given to employee satisfaction. With all of that going on in the background, who could blame a CSR if a little negativity crept into his or her contacts with customers?

That's Brandi's point, in a nutshell. "Given the kind of culture and environment in which we often work, in order to create those positive customer experiences constantly, we have to very deliber-

ately create a positive thinking area for ourselves," she says.

That means getting rid of the sarcastic signs and posters. In addition, says Brandi, "we have to watch our language, and we even have to watch our thinking patterns. When you get off the phone with somebody who has been difficult, you can't let yourself say, 'Boy, that guy was a real jerk,' because it might carry over to the next phone call." In retail environments, she adds, comments like that might be made in front of the next customer.

"Positive thinking is a choice," Brandi says. "It's getting up every morning and talking to yourself about the intention to be positive, and to look for the good in every situation. And it really is a matter of reminding yourself to be positive all day long."

You can train yourself to keep a positive attitude and not to let a bad experience with a customer carry over to affect your day. "Creating and maintaining a positive attitude is totally a choice," Brandi says. "If you choose not to take in the negative, if you choose not to let a negative experience upset you, then you can create your own culture."

### How to stay positive

While Brandi admits that resolving to keep a positive attitude is no easy task, she does offer some techniques that will help. For instance:





## SkillSharpener Web Extra

- **Write notes to yourself.** Brandi says that she uses Post-it notes to remind herself of her attitude and what she wants to think about that day. "So you might write yourself a Post-it note every day to say, 'I intend to keep a positive attitude,' or 'I intend to treat everyone with a smile,' even if it's just the smile in your voice — whatever your intention is."
- **Find a supportive buddy.** Find someone you can turn to or call to say, "I'm having a bad day, help me to turn my attitude around" — what Brandi calls a "positive-thinking buddy."
- **Create a bulletin board.** "Invite people to post funny jokes, as long as they are not sarcastic," says Brandi. "You can also keep a library in the office with funny videos or inspirational videos and audiotapes."
- **Keep a "gratitude journal."** "Use it to keep track of all of the things that you are grateful for."

On a bad day, you can look at the journal to inspire yourself." One of the things you might keep in your gratitude journal, Brandi suggests, is a list of things that you know through experience will lift you out of a bad mood — things like a "soothing cup of tea," a "10-minute walk," a "short meditation," or "thoughts of some place that you love being."

- **Try the "three good things" exercise.** "At the end of the day," says Brandi, "I write down three good things that happened to me that day, and why. If you keep this up, you will begin to see patterns. You begin to see that something that could possibly have been a negative was something you turned around into a positive."

Contact: JoAnna Brandi, JoAnna Brandi & Company Inc., [www.customerarecoach.com](http://www.customerarecoach.com). ■

