



The Customer Communicator Web Extra



Don't let your job sap your self-esteem

What can a rep do to keep his or her head raised high amid all of the work and stress and negativity that often prevails in the customer service center?

"It all starts at the very highest level of thinking — in our personal attitudes and in how we think and communicate with ourselves," says JoAnna Brandi of JoAnna Brandi & Company Inc., a customer service consulting firm. "Customer service reps have to look at themselves and acknowledge that either they chose that job or the job chose them. But either way, it's in their best interest, as well as in the best interest of the customer, for them to show up and be fully present in their work."

Here's Brandi's advice:

■ **Master your job.** Try spending five or 10 minutes each morning reading something that inspires or motivates you to do a better job, or read a few pages from a customer service handbook or guidebook. Each day, try to find a new tactic that you can apply during your customer contacts throughout the day. "And keep up the positive self-talk about the efforts you are making and the impact you are having on customers," Brandi says.

■ **Keep track of your successes.** Another thing that you can do to boost your morale is to "find the joy in doing your job well," says Brandi. She suggests that reps keep a journal on their desks and jot down notes on successful calls. "Think of it as a victory log, or just a place where you can jot down your small wins during the day.

And at the end of the day, focus your attention on the successes." It's just a small way to keep up your spirits by taking personal responsibility and personal pride in the job that you are doing for customers.

■ **Become an emotional genius.** According to Brandi, emotional intelligence is a matter of understanding how emotions can affect attitudes and communications — both customers and your own. People with high emotional intelligence are better able to identify and manage their emotions.

"If you are doing well in your job, you are probably already a little bit of an emotional genius," Brandi says. "So congratulate yourself when you have done a good job of managing a customer interaction in which emotions may have played a part."

■ **Learn to manage your stress levels.** "There's no doubt that customer service is a stressful job," Brandi says. But the amount of stress you take home every day and its impact on your self-esteem is up to you.

Learn to distance yourself mentally from the situation when you perceive that a customer is angry or difficult. "Instead of allowing that to trigger an automatic physical response, train yourself to think, 'what is so wrong in this person's life that he has to speak to me like that?' or 'I wonder what I can possibly do to give this person a hand?'"

