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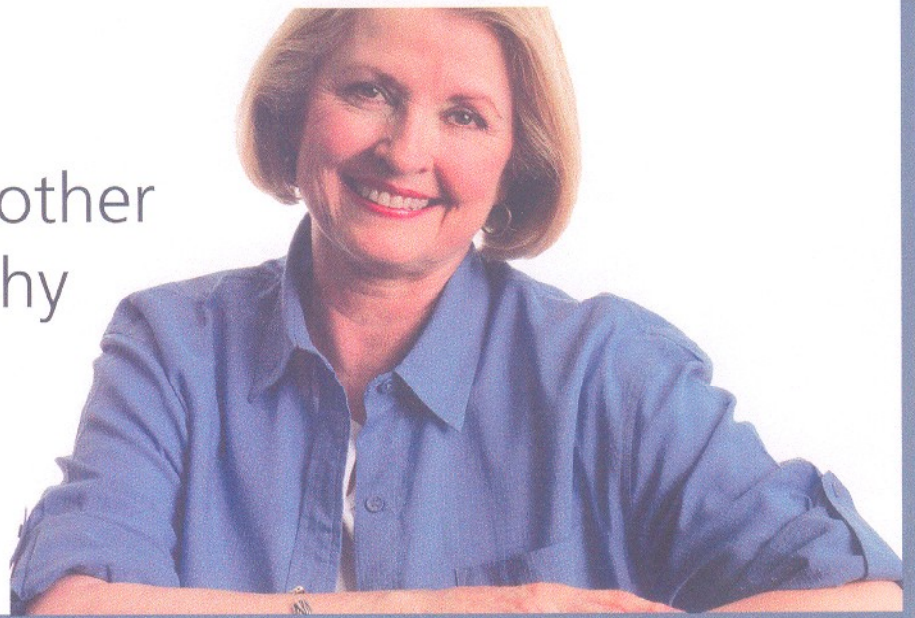


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The Grandmother Philosophy



By Chris Coltran,
president,
C2 Unlimited, LLC.

November 10, 2002 started out like any other day. I was working as a sales rep for a flooring distributor and awoke to the usual sound of a 6:30 a.m. wake-up call. By 8:00 a.m. I was headed to my first appointment of the day.

Of all the sales calls, sales meetings, and sales trainings I had ever attended, today would prove to be the most important sales lesson of them all, and a turning point in my career. Unbeknownst to me, everything in my life would change before returning to my hotel room later that evening.

After spending a few minutes saying hello to a half dozen salespeople, I sat down with the general manager and owner for my appointment. The first item on my agenda was ask John to answer a question that I had been curious about since our last meeting. John's store, in a market with a population of 90,000 people, had consistently been in the top five in the country and I wanted to know why? What were they doing differently? What was their secret? How could they be so highly ranked when they were competing against stores in much larger markets? John's response was one that I will never forget.

He thought that if he told me I would laugh, but after promising not to, he told me he felt the reason his store had been so successful was because he had always told his salespeople to treat their customers like they would treat their own grandma.

I immediately looked at John and said, "What a great idea for a book!" His response was, "Yeah! But who would write it?"

As soon as I walked out of his store, I thought to myself, why not me?

When I arrived back to my hotel that evening, I made the first outline of what I had decided to call the Grandmother Philosophy.

If you were selling new furniture to your grandmother, imagine how much better you might treat her compared to a regular customer. You would make sure and only show her products that you would feel comfortable with her buying and you would never sell her a product that you would not put into your own home. You would give her a fair price and you wouldn't try to cheat her or take advantage of her. Because she is your grandmother, she expects you to make a profit. What kind of grandmother wouldn't want her grandson or granddaughter to make a good living? You would try to sell her your best products, and not let her buy something that might not withstand the test of time. You would put your best delivery crew on the job and you would make sure they were on time and professional. The day of her delivery, you would stop by her house on your lunch break to make sure everything had going smoothly. If she had a problem, you would take care of it immediately and not give her the runaround. You would call her the day after delivery and verify that everything was to her satisfaction. You would give her the best service you possibly could.

The Grandmother Philosophy is an acronym for the word grandmother:

- G**reet every customer immediately
- R**ead body language
- A**ttitude is everything
- N**ever prejudice
- D**o unto others as you would want done unto you
- M**ake an impression that will last a lifetime
- O**wn your Products
- T**hink like a Salesperson
- H**onesty, Honesty, Honesty
- E**veryone is a potential customer
- R**emember to "treat every customer like you would treat your own grandmother"

Make An Impression That Will Last A Lifetime

Imagine it's Monday morning and you are sitting behind your desk surfing the internet catching up on the latest news and scores from over the weekend, drinking your third cup of coffee, all while waiting for your next customer to walk through the door. Just as you read that the quarterback on your fantasy football team is out for the season, the chime from the door indicates someone has entered your store. As you look up from your computer, you see someone who resembles your grandmother walking towards your desk. At second glance, you realize the customer is your granny, so you jump to your feet and approach her with open arms.

When a potential customer walks into your store, what are you going to do? Consumers get turned-off when they walk into a store and a salesperson from across the room just looks up and does nothing. The look on their face says, "Just what I need, another customer to keep me from doing my work." They might acknowledge their presence by nodding or smiling and then they let the customer roam around the store while they finish up what they were doing. Is what they are doing more important than a new customer? More important than what they might buy? Who knows? I have met hundreds of people who had this very experience happen to them. A salesperson needs to first realize their customer got into their car, dodged through traffic, fought for a parking space, and then walked into their store. Is this how you would want to be greeted after such an amazing feat?

Do you remember the last time this has happened to you? I bet you can, right down to what the salesperson was wearing. Have you been back to that store since? The average consumer shops

two stores before making a purchase, so if this experience happens when they walk into your store, you have lost the sale. You might have the best products on the market, the best location, the best advertising, and the largest inventory in town, but more important than all of these things is the first impression you make with your customers. Good or bad, these first impressions will last a lifetime.

To illustrate this point, a story told by a woman in one of my seminars had affected her for many years. She had been shopping in a department store and had been waiting at a sales counter for some assistance while two employees finished having a personal conversation. When one salesperson finally turned to help, instead of helping her, he helped a woman who had just stepped up to the counter. Disgusted with the way she was treated, she stormed out of the store and has never shopped there again. The amazing part of this story is that it happened over 30 years ago.

People will hold grudges against a company for a very long time. When a customer walks into your store, they are the king of the sale, which is why you should treat them

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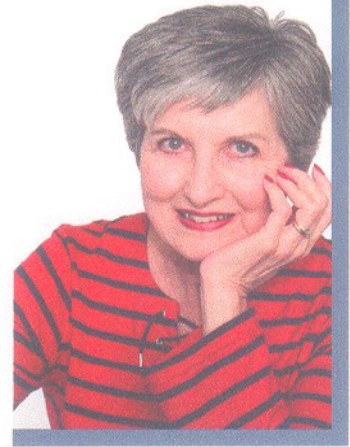
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Now let's get back to Monday morning:

As you jump to your feet, you walk towards your grandmother as though you have springs in your shoes. Happy and excited to see her, your face has a smile from ear to ear. The last thing on your mind is coming up with some fancy opening line to use on her. She is your kin. You trust her and she trusts you. You give her a hug and ask how Grandpa is doing. The words, "Can I help you?" don't even cross your mind. You tell her what a pleasant surprise and that you certainly didn't expect to see her today.

Your goal with every customer should be to get them to trust you. If they trust you, they will buy from you. As far as your grandmother is concerned, you wouldn't deceive her, cheat her, or try to sell her anything that you were not comfortable with. Is this how you approach all of your customers? I understand you might find yourself in an awkward situation if you started hugging all of your customers, but figuratively speaking, what's wrong with approaching your customers with the same energy and enthusiasm that you would as if she were actually your Granny?

Obviously, every customer who walks into your store isn't going to



Chris Coltran, based in Acworth, Ga., is the author of the book, "Selling To Your Grandmother," and president of C2 Unlimited, LLC. He has conducted sales seminars and motivational talks around the country. He has a background in manufacturing, distribution, wholesale, and retail, as well as being a sales and marketing consultant.