

# Happy Employees Produce Repeat Customers

By John Madden

If employees feel good about what they're doing, then customers will feel great about what they're getting. How do you make *that* happen?

Years ago, I traveled daily by the "tube" into London ". I got off at Bond Street Station, across from my office on Oxford Street.

Upon arrival at the top of the escalator, I gave my ticket to an attendant, who threw it into a box. I thought this was a dull job until I became aware of the cheerful Jamaican gentleman, Stanley, who worked this shift every morning. He smiled at everyone, saying a cheerful "How's it goin', mate?" to his regulars. He made thousands of commuters smile.

We grew to expect it. We looked forward to this "wake-up smile". He never let us down, and he never displayed a bad mood. This man, I decided, was a *success!* He had all the symptoms. He appeared happy, he made others happy, and he loved doing what he was doing.

As a manager in a major hotel company at the time, I was invited to speak at a London high school career day. I was asked to speak on success. I decided to talk to Stanley at Bond Street Station, and find out what his secret was.

We met for coffee after his shift, and we talked about his job. I asked him how he managed to maintain an almost constant cheerfulness every morning through the rush hour, in what I thought was an unexciting job.

He smiled and said, "John, I see many people coming off that escalator every day who look sad and stressed; people who I know are much better-off than I am, but who don't seem to be happy. I love to put a smile on their faces and help them start the day with a better outlook.

I asked, "But how do you do that? How did you become so positive and encouraging to other people"?

He replied, “When I was a boy in Jamaica, my father worked as a porter at a fancy hotel. He greeted guests, carried luggage, and arranged tours. During the school holidays he would take me with him to the hotel. He was very popular with the guests. He was always upbeat, often going out of his way to make a guest feel happy. This was *his* hotel, and these were *his* guests”

“ He once told me that if I want to be happy and successful in life, I have to make other people feel good, regardless of the job I’m doing. Too many people out there are so focused on their own minor problems that they have become unproductive and unhappy, constantly making excuses for their failure.”

Try these steps to get *your* employees feeling good about their jobs – and your customers.

1. Make your employees feel part of the business - and show them that they are.
2. Get to know your people, and show interest in their progress. The general manager of the Wichita Airport Hilton, Mike Phipps, practices this rather well - which is why he’s had one of the lowest turnover rates in full-service hotels. It also explains why, after the September 11 tragedy, many of his employees offered to take a reduction in wages to help the hotel through a short period of reduced business, following a drop in air travel.
3. Use the four most important words to solicit their help and input: “*What is your opinion?*”
4. Say *thanks* more often than you do. After a sense of achievement, the greatest motivator is to be acknowledged for your contribution. My doctor, Dr. Kevin Hoppock of Wichita Clinic on East 21<sup>st</sup> pulls a one dollar gold plated coin out of his pocket and awards it to an employee he catches being especially upbeat and helpful to coworkers and patients.

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