

# Practice Points

## Above and Beyond Our Call of Duty

If you were asked to provide an example of a general corporate mission statement, you would probably agree that an effective shared mission for any business is “To Gain and Keep Satisfied Customers.” The mission of an organization is created for those involved to have a common purpose. Mission statements are then oriented throughout the organization, so that all personnel are clear about corporate goals, strategies and objectives.

Recently, I flew internationally with Air Canada Airlines to attend a convention in Milwaukee. The best of the best leaders in this industry were invited to share their knowledge with each other, collaborate for the benefit of all, and to network. Attending a conference abroad is an exciting opportunity, and for myself, there was much preparation and organization required. I landed in Milwaukee with the assumption that my challenges of travel went smoothly, and was ready to network and make new business contacts.

After retrieving a telephone message at midnight on the day of my arrival I was shocked to find out that my identification had been found by an Air Canada staff member on the airplane that I had occupied. The challenge was that the aircraft had already landed in Atlanta. It’s frightening to be a visitor to a different country – without identification. Yikes!

Through a series of telephone calls and gracious assistance by an outstanding Air Canada station employee, I was able to retrieve my identification via overnight courier service, directly to my hotel. What a relief!

How does this experience relate to “Above & Beyond Our Call to Duty”? The employee of Air Canada who found my identification did not have to take it upon herself to contact me by telephone and advise me of the found identification. This employee did not have to arrange for a courier to return my identification in the most timely manner possible, nor did she have to follow up with me to provide a tracking number for the courier package to ensure that I could track the package down if need be. This employee of Air Canada went above & beyond her call of duty to ensure that her customer (indirectly) was taken care of.

In business there is a term called “Moment of Truth.” A Moment of Truth is an episode in which a prospect or client comes into contact with any aspect of your business, and forms an impression of the business’s quality and service. In the example above, my “Moment of Truth” relating to Air Canada Airlines formed an impression of an organization who is very committed to providing a positive travel experience. We live in a very competitive society, where business

strategy is carefully orchestrated toward customer service excellence. However, somewhere in the vast chain of events where people are in contact with their customers, a lot can go awry. Everyone inside the organization can play a crucial role in taking responsibility to provide excellence in customer service, thus encouraging positive “Moments of Truth” in the eyes of their clientele.

In a recent article published in *Cosmetic Dentistry*, Spring Edition, 2005, Dr. Dick Barnes, a world leader in practice development, states, “We have to take responsibility for relationships. We owe that to all our co-workers – those whose work we depend on as well as those who depend on us.” It takes everyone within an organization to make it successful. The company becomes great not just because of one individual, or a corporate mission statement, but because it is an organization built on trust, teamwork and caring individuals.

What can you do to take your service level above and beyond your call of duty? If your corporate mission is “To Gain And Keep Satisfied Customers,” or some derivative thereof, ask yourself what you can do personally to make a positive contribution and do it!

As a side note to the example relating to Air Canada Airlines, during my return home to Canada I coincidentally sat beside the pilot who flew the plane that my identification was found on. Not only did we share our story, and determine that this was indeed a tremendous example of an employee going above and beyond for a customer, but he drove me home from the airport to save me the expense of a taxi. My husband watched as he got out of his vehicle in uniform and handed me my luggage. Now there is another prospective client (my husband) with an outstanding impression of the service provided by Air Canada.

*Penny Tremblay is the director of Northern Lights Presentations and an educator who helps organizations and individuals achieve their goals through seminars, keynote addresses and online-learning solutions. Visit her online at [www.northernlightspresentations.com](http://www.northernlightspresentations.com).*



Penny Tremblay, CTM, CL