

Workplace
Wisdom
For
9 To Thrive

*Proven tactics and hacks
to get ahead in today's workplace*

Nina Sunday

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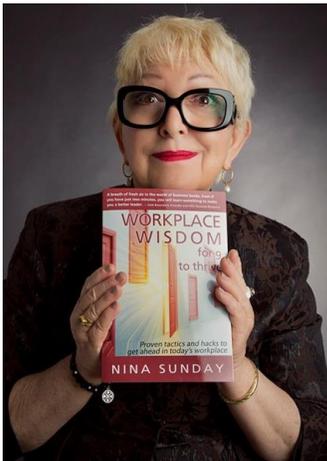
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Nina Sunday, CSP*

BA, Dip Ed, Grad Cert (AustFilmTVRadioSchl)

* Certified Speaking Professional



- Nina Sunday, speaker, facilitator, author on workplace know-how
- 1990, founded Brainpower Training
- pioneered Speed Reading and Memory training Australia-wide
- Won *Innovation in Learning* award from the Australian Institute of Training and Development
- Authored five training videos on workplace know-how
- Member: Mensa Australia
- Past State President and board member Professional Speakers Australia

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INTRODUCTION

Predictions around disruption to the world of work declare there is a new work order. Young people today may have 17 jobs in five different careers. Portfolio careers are on the rise i.e. not one job, one employer, but multiple jobs and employers, perhaps over more than one profession.

In a tech world, it's high social skills that help you stand out and get ahead. The best managers are outstanding communicators who know how to lead a team, collaborate with a diverse range of people and able to influence peers and customers to take action. They know it's not what you say but how you say it that makes the difference. Word choice and how we use language impacts the way we persuade others. In the age of disruption, being adept at human interaction is rewarded with higher wages.

Being average at your job is over. Not being interdisciplinary can harm your career. To thrive in a rapidly changing world, managers and teams need to continuously improve all aspects of their workplace know-how: the art of communication and influence, productivity, sales and service, leading people and creating a conscious and transparent workplace culture.

To future-proof your employability in a VUCA world, (short for volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous), constant reinvention is the key to keeping up, evolving and staying relevant. Your job IS change. It's up to you to stay change agile and continuously grow and reboot your brain. I trust this book will help you achieve the getting of workplace wisdom.

How to use this book

For managers

Each chapter is a stand-alone piece of micro-learning. Copy a chapter to distribute to your team and invite them to read before the next team meeting. You'll find a list of trigger questions in the article *How to Brainstorm* within the *Stay Curious* section, such as:

- What can we **start** doing?

- What can we **stop** doing?
- What can we do **more of**?
- What can we do **less of**?
- What can we **improve**?

And when you've captured in writing a wish-list of next actions, then rate each suggestion as an A, B, C or D according to its priority, for example:

- A. low effort, high payoff – do first
- B. low effort, low payoff – do next
- C. high effort, high payoff – just get started with the first action-step
- D. high effort, low payoff – don't bother

For individual contributors

Show this book to your manager and volunteer to copy a chapter to send around, with your manager's blessing, to team members with the invitation to read then participate in an ideas discussion at the next team meeting.

You might like to suggest your manager leads that discussion, or if they decline, offer to do so yourself. At the meeting, use the trigger questions and record each suggestion in writing as they come up. Allocate a specific time. After idea generation, go back to quickly rate each suggestion as an A, B, C or D priority.

By you taking the initiative this way, (where there's a positive workplace culture), it will likely identify you as a high-potential team member destined for leadership. (However, if this suggestion is not well-received, ask yourself what can be done to make the culture more conducive to growth and learning; or was it perhaps the manner in which you suggested you take the initiative?)

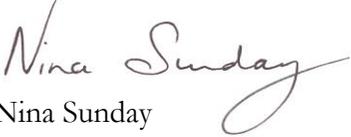
Always be reading

To grow your workplace wisdom read a non-fiction book (digital or print or listen to an audiobook) at least 10 minutes a day. Read at least one book a month, 12 books a year. See the article *Read Your Way to the Top* in the

Gather Wisdom section of this book for reasons to read every day. Leaders are readers. Be a reader.

Feel free to stay in touch by visiting the contact page at www.brainpowertraining.com.au and sharing your thoughts.

The way we did business five years ago can't be the way we do business in the next five. Constant reinvention is the key.


Nina Sunday

Love your
customers

LOVE YOUR CUSTOMERS

Business is based on relationships and relationships are based on qualities such as sincerity, empathy and generosity. The most powerful force in business is love.

Love delivers returns way beyond expectations.

It helps the enterprise to thrive, not just survive. It propels your career forward. It provides a sense of meaning and satisfaction in your work. Helps you do your best work.

Just as people can hear you smiling through the phone, they can feel you coming from the heart. We're all here to help each other and get ahead.

Ever seen the bumper sticker practice random acts of kindness? Why not practice random acts of Customer kindness? Not because you expect something in return, but because it's the right way to behave.

The less you expect in return for acts of professional generosity, the more you will receive. Lennon and McCartney said it better than anyone else, 'In the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make.'⁽¹⁾

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON REASONS CLIENTS LEAVE?

Useful lessons can be learned by analysing the reasons clients stop using any business.

A classic research study by LeBoeuf⁽²⁾ identified five typical reasons customers leave, and here they are:

1. die or move away
2. develop other friendships
3. price
4. dissatisfaction with the product or service
5. attitude of indifference toward the customer by the owner, manager, or staff member.

Can you guess which of these five reasons was cited more often?

Conduct a guessing exercise with your colleagues by asking each person to assign a percentage out of 100 next to each reason listed. (Total percentage for all five reasons should add up to 100%.)

Price

Is price most important?

Many people assume most people shop on price, but research shows only 9% of customers are price shoppers. Price shoppers are not loyal. They switch from supplier to supplier and won't necessarily stay just because you provide good service.

Dissatisfaction

What about dissatisfaction? Is that the main reason to stop using a firm? Not according to the research. Only 14% leave because they are dissatisfied with the product or service, 5% develop new relationships, 3% move away, 1% die.

That leaves 68%.

Indifference

The main reason clients stop using a business is indifference by the owner, manager or staff members.

What behaviour is perceived as indifferent? Lack of eye contact, lack of friendliness, doing one's job in a neutral, humdrum way — these are perceived as indifference.

Last time I flew with Qantas airline, during the usual announcement, 'Qantas flight 508 to Brisbane is now boarding through Gate 8', they added, 'On behalf of Qantas, we hope you enjoy a pleasant flight.'

That's an extra statement that's positive and friendly. It's something a little extra that comes across as 'they care'.

While responding to someone speaking to you face-to-face, if your eyes stay glued to the computer screen, fingers keep tapping the keyboard, it sends a message they are an interruption. Lack of urgency when a client is anxious about a missing or late item is also interpreted as indifference.

The ‘moment of truth’⁽³⁾ principle in customer service highlights that with every interaction your client is deciding whether to do business with you or to continue to do business with you.

Observe for yourself. Are all customer touch points in your organisation positive and friendly?

Action

1. Notice next time you go through a checkout at the supermarket. Did the operator make eye contact and smile? Are they personable?
2. When you answer the phone do you sound welcoming and ready to assist?
3. If you can’t say yes to a customer request, can you be creative and come up with a suggestion along the lines of ‘but what I can do is . . . ?’
4. Find reasons to stay in touch with regular clients; demonstrate you value this relationship. Create a SIT (Stay In Touch) list.

Customers Say They Want 4 Things:

1. Friendly, caring service, with courtesy and respect.
2. Flexibility and creativity. Never say ‘No’, cut red tape, make an exception for them and their individual needs.
3. First contact resolution — customers want first person they speak with to solve their problem.
4. Recovery — it’s not the fact that the organisation or an employee has made a mistake, it’s how you fix it that can ‘wow’ a customer.

Apologise, fix the mistake within 72 hours, do something extra, and follow up. A complaint is a gift if you recover quickly and creatively.

CUSTOMER SERVICE HACK: ANSWER THE PHONE WITH A SMILE IN YOUR VOICE

In the eyes of your customer, every contact is a moment of truth.

A moment of truth, because with every phone call your caller might be deciding whether to do business with your organisation or continue (to do business with you). Have you ever rung a company, and by the way they answered the phone, you felt as if you were an interruption?

How well are your people managing all the moments of truth occurring in your organisation every single day? Is each customer touch point enhancing your image and reputation, or are your people squandering the relationship?

Customer service best practice dictates that you have a standard procedure for answering the phone — and here it is.

When You Hear Any Telephone Ring

1. On the first ring, stop whatever you are doing. Focus on answering the call.
2. On second ring, put a smile on your face. Smiling changes the shape of your face and resonance of your voice. Customers can literally hear you smiling through the phone.
3. Answer after third ring, and never let it go to four rings.
4. Say your company name or division, then your name; for example, 'Asset Services, this is Jim'.

How Memory Works

Memory is a fragile and curious thing. Saying 'Jim speaking' is not as effective as, 'This is Jim'.

'Speaking' as the last word interferes with remembering the person's name.

If you make your name last thing you say, it makes it easier for your caller to remember it. This is because of the Recency Effect⁽⁴⁾ — people better remember the last thing they hear.

Using your first name gives your clients a chance to build a relationship with you and your organisation.

Consistency

As well as friendliness, customers value consistency. If one person adds ‘How may I help you?’ or ‘Good morning’ / ‘Good afternoon’, don’t all team members have to add that too? So the person going the extra mile in this instance is actually providing inconsistent service; (unless you make it part of ‘how we do things around here’).

But I’m not recommending adding extra sentences!

When they ring, clients want to know only two things:

- Have I rung the right place?
- Who am I speaking with?

As long as those two things are covered, additional phrases are unnecessary.

Action

1. First ring — stop whatever you are doing.
2. Second ring — put a smile on your face.
3. Answer after third ring with, < Your company or division >. This is < your name >.

Suggestion — find an image of a smile and display it near your phone as a reminder.

DO WHAT YOU SAY YOU ARE GOING TO DO

With customers, do you do what you say you are going to do? Do you do it when you say you are going to do it?

How common is it for someone to promise, ‘I’ll find out and call you straight back . . . ’ and they don’t? Or, ‘I’ll have it to you by the end of the week . . . ’ and it never arrives?

Do what you say you are going to do. Deliver what you promise.

In business, if you say you will do something, you absolutely, every time, must follow through, and get the job done in the time you said you would do it.

And if it can’t be done on time . . . let them know. Keeping your client updated on the progress of a task or project keeps everyone happy.

The first secret to being successful in life is building trust by keeping all your promises.

Your customer trusts you when you’re reliable, consistent and dependable. Never promise big things then let them down.

Next chapter we’ll explore a service tactic of creating a buffer when promising timeframes, so you not only do what you say you are going to do, you get it done a little faster.

MASTER THE PARADOX OF EXCEEDING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

Customer Service is providing a little more than customers expect; exceeding customer expectations by doing a little extra.

But here’s the paradox. What initially exceeds a customer’s expectations soon becomes the norm. So we must continuously improve standards of service. Companies have got better at understanding what satisfies

consumers, so the bar keeps getting raised. As you raise the bar, customers raise the bar yet again.

How do you create a customer who is satisfied with the service you provide? Go the extra mile. Give your customer some extra personalised attention. Be observant and pay attention to details.

For example:

- An auto service company also cleans the windscreen, blackens the tyres.
- A shoe store brings out from the storeroom three sizes of the preferred style of shoe, next size up and next size down. How often are shoes a size too small or too large?
- A bedding company has the delivery team wear disposable booties over their shoes to protect the floors.

And here's the second paradox: a business can't provide the very best service at the very cheapest price. It takes time and effort to provide superior service. However, not to strive to find lots of little ways to update and refresh the customer experience is a business mistake.

Why not make a fast-tracked service available for extra charge? As a case in point, a website hosting company provided only one level of technical support. A customer with a website that was off-air was told by a non-technical, Customer Service person, 24 hours after first complaining the website is off-air, 'We've escalated it to our Senior Technical Team; they will get back to you in 24–48 hours.' Being off-air affects revenue and reputation. To not have a fast-response level of service available for clients who don't mind paying a little extra loses customers. For this hosting company, clients are transferring to other hosts in droves.

Sometimes a service that is too low-level because it is too low-cost, is a business risk, to both client and service provider.

Action

1. What are some examples when you've gone the extra mile for your customer that didn't cost a ton?
2. What's something you can do in your role that is a little extra and unanticipated that doesn't take a lot of time?

3. What's something the client will value but takes only a little extra effort?

UNDER-PROMISE, OVER-DELIVER TIMEFRAMES

I responded to a television promotion by purchasing an item over the phone. In these days of fast service delivery, I expected fulfilment quicker than the 14 days I was told it would take to arrive. Still, I mentally locked in 14 days.

When the item arrived in seven days, I was pleasantly surprised and felt good about the company I'd bought from. By building a buffer around promised time of delivery, the company set themselves up for success.

Imagine if they say delivery is seven days. Because that is the promise, when it arrives in seven days I feel neutral; I purchased and we have a social contract they will deliver. But if for some reason there is a delay with mail and item is delivered on the eighth or later day, I would feel negative about the experience.

Timeframe Promises

In their eagerness to please their customer, does your customer service team declare things will happen within the shortest timeframe, one which does not allow for contingencies? Without a time buffer the risk is that you'll either merely fulfil the social contract, leading to a neutral response, or by over promising, set up your client for disappointment. Every day your customer has to wait beyond the promised timeframe they become progressively more negative.

In a theme park, if a ride is advertised with a 30-minute wait, actual wait might be only 25 minutes, or a 20-minute wait might be 15. Isn't this better than being told there's a 20-minute wait and actually waiting 30?

Consider a furniture retailer who orders product from overseas. It's common practice, when the shipping container becomes full, even before all

items are packed, remaining orders are carried over to the next container. Aren't staff better off to say it takes '12 weeks or less' to arrive, rather than give a low-high range such as '8 to 12 weeks to arrive'? Will your client consider it 'late' after 8 weeks, one day?

Same day promises are similar. Instead of verbally committing to sending it 'straight away', say 'soon' instead. Perhaps find out first, 'When do you need this by?' Your client might surprise you with, 'I'm out of office next week, so don't send until . . .'

Alternatively, if the reply is along the lines of, 'I have a meeting tomorrow at 9 am where I'll need the information', then you know this is a priority to get done with urgency.

Another way to apply this tactic . . . your customer wants something done *fast*. You estimate it will take one hour to complete, assuming no interruptions. Let your client know you'll get onto this, but promise completion in two hours.

When you are finished in one hour as you anticipated, your client will be delighted you were so prompt. And if for any reason you are interrupted, you have allowed yourself a buffer, so you can still appear efficient and professional.

Vary timeframes as appropriate; promise 'by end of the week' yet send it to them tomorrow. This gives you extra time should an unanticipated delay arise.

What Not To Do

A holiday resort would surprise repeat guests with an unexpected fruit hamper in their room. This created customer delight and goodwill. But then Marketing decided to promote in the new brochure, 'free fruit basket to repeat guests upon arrival.' That's when lack of appreciation manifested.

- 'It's not very big, is it?'
- 'I don't like bananas; can I swap for oranges?'

The lesson here is to think of something a little extra you can give or do without informing your client ahead of time. It's not part of the package, they didn't pay for it, they don't know about it, therefore it's not expected and more likely to be appreciated.

How Much Appreciation Can We Expect?

In everything there is a balance.

Social psychologists are researching under-promising and over-delivering.⁽⁵⁾ Clients are not as grateful as we might expect when promises are exceeded. Going the extra mile is touted as a customer service golden rule; yet what clients want is to have their expectations met. Yes, you want to avoid negative feelings generated by disappointing a customer; but don't expect that same customer to actively express gratitude or appreciation when their request is exceeded. Customers are only human. So exceed expectations, but only just a little.

Action

1. When making any time promise, when appropriate, be non-specific and include a buffer around the timeframe. Use phrases such as 'today or tomorrow' or 'soon'. Then get it done as soon as you can, as if you'd promised your client 'today'.
2. Think of three ways you can under-promise and over-deliver timeframes in your role.

HOW TO SAY 'NO' TO CLIENTS WITHOUT USING THE 'NO' WORD

It's good to be flexible with customers and make exceptions to rules. But how do you say 'no' to someone when you just cannot agree to what they are asking for? How can you manage client expectations? *How* you say 'no' can make all the difference between keeping a customer or losing them.

Here is a 4-step process using the example of a customer wanting you to extend an expired warranty on a camera so it can be repaired at no charge:

Step 1.

Don't say 'no', instead tell them you wish you could do what they are asking for . . . (*'I wish I could . . .'* OR *'I know you would like us to . . .'*)

Step 2.

Use the word ‘but’ and give a neutral reason.

Step 3:

Use the word ‘but’ again, and this time tell them what you *can* do for them. (‘ . . . *but what I **can** do is . . .*’).

Step 4:

Diarise what you say you are going to do and deliver whatever you have promised.

Remember To:

- speak with confidence
- apologise . . . and sound sincere.
- have empathy . . . and sound empathetic
- deliver the action you promise.

For example:

1. ‘I wish I could extend the warranty on this camera so it can be repaired at no charge’ or ‘I know you would like us to extend the warranty on this camera so it can be repaired at no charge’
2. ‘ . . . but the manufacturer doesn’t allow us to . . . ’
3. ‘ . . . but what I **can** do is arrange for a quote from the workshop at no charge, so you only pay if you decide to go ahead with the repair.’
4. Keep track of your promise by adding it to your to-do list.

Most reasonable clients know it isn’t always possible for you to say ‘yes’ every request. If you give them a reason, explaining it in friendly fashion, with empathy, then they are more likely to accept a ‘no’.

REFERENCES

The quotes, anecdotes and ideas described in this book were accumulated from a variety of sources over a number of years. While we've made every attempt to fully attribute the origin of each of these items, the author may have been unable to list some sources in the detail preferred.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nina Sunday is an international speaker, educator and author. Professional Speakers Australia awarded her CSP designation (Certified Speaking Professional), held by only 12% of professional speakers worldwide.

After working in education, the performing arts, sales and television, Nina founded Australian training company, Brainpower Training, and over two decades grew a network of Facilitators delivering business skills to Top 500 companies, SMEs (small-medium enterprises) and government.

After a decade niching in Speed Reading and Memory, she spent the next 17 years developing and delivering programs in Productivity, Communication, Presentation Skills, Emotional Intelligence, Leadership, Change and Sales. Nina Sunday is the Workplace Maven, empowering managers and teams sharpen their workplace know-how for different thinking, better results.

Qualifications include a Bachelor of Arts and Diploma in Education, plus graduating in Direction and Production Management from the three-year program of the Australian Film, TV and Radio School.

After more than three decades based in Sydney, Nina recently relocated to discover a new-found love of her hometown of Brisbane in Queensland, Australia.