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It may be outside your personal character to be self-promoting, but in business it is vital to promote your business, your staff, and all the services the company offers to expand the market and reap the benefits of unforeseen opportunity. In the bigger scheme of entrepreneurial endeavor, one never knows what effect communication will have on the consumer and what effect it will have on the business. Seemingly unimportant comments made about what the company has to offer, can have bountiful effects.

While casually sitting in the beauty shop, I heard the beautician telling clients about her shopping experience at the local garden center. She was amazed at the information she received from one of the staff. “I didn’t know they grew their own perennials … this year they have added over 70 new varieties. They just have everything you can imagine.” As I observed the clients, one happened to be on the city’s beautification board and another worked for a development company.

I am sure that as the garden center employee explained the company’s perennial operation to this customer, he had no idea of where or to whom this valuable information would extend. The point is that if your staff is not promoting your services and making a positive influence on the customer, the chance may pass you by.

We are taught that humility is a virtue and that it is not polite to brag. It may feel awkward to talk about ourselves and what we can do well, even better than others, but there is a difference between bragging and self-promotion. In business, the company name and the benefits of buying from you must ring out loudly. Who knows your business better than the people who work there? Part of the training within the organization should be instruction on self-promotion. Actions and comments made to customers must reflect expertise and be made in a way that will maintain a level of trust that cannot be misinterpreted by the listener. Training on self-promotion is an opportunity to brainstorm within the company and share what has been successful and mistakes to avoid.

Self-promotion distributes facts about the company. For example, “We have an excellent selection of perennials that we grow, with 70 new varieties this year. They are great plants for this area and look how big and colorful they are.” This statement of fact and benefit is different than saying, “We have the best plants in town; we grow them better than anyone else.” Self-promotion is exactly what it says, promoting the company, plants and services, not putting down the competition.

Self-promotion can be accomplished in many subtle activities. Educate the customer by giving a seminar or topics of local interest. Use “teachable moments” to acquaint the customer with new products that will contribute to gardening success. A follow-up visit, after the installation of a landscape provides opportunity for explaining additional services and offering add-on sales. If you are out of stock on an item, offer to special order it or suggest an alternative that would be a suitable substitute. Your company name should be displayed on every item in the store, replacing the manufacturer or the “made in China” sticker. Gift items should always be delivered with the company logo on the card. Clean trucks with the company name, or a newsletter or Web site that is distinctively yours can provide an informational source for promoting your company.

Remember, promotion only happens if you make it happen.

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