USING AND REMEMBERING NAMES

Remembering and using people’s names is one effective way to add warm and personal service to your customers. It also marks you as a professional employee who values your customers and the relationships you have with others.

Why is it important to you to have someone use and remember your name? What does a name do?

Here are some common reasons we like someone to use our name:

- Recognition
- Trust
- Rapport
- Self-esteem
- Establishes family links
- Provides a feeling of importance

Why don’t we remember and use names more often?

- Don’t want to seem too familiar
- Too difficult to pronounce or afraid to pronounce incorrectly
- Embarrassed with not remembering
- Too much going on at once — information overload
- It doesn’t seem important at the time

Most people remember faces better than names. Faces are a unique, visual image that the mind grasps. Names are a sound, and unless the sound is familiar like a jingle, the mind doesn’t grasp it well. There are some ways we can learn to remember names better, but we must remember it is a skill, and like all skills remembering names takes practice and may come slowly at first.

Guidelines for using names

There are some guidelines to remember when using names to ensure you use them sincerely and appropriately.

- The correct pronunciation is extremely important.
- Use a formal title such as Mr. or Ms.
- Only use a given name if the customer has given you permission to do so, or if it is company policy.
- Do not address a group of people collectively with a slang term, e.g. “Guys”, use “Ladies and Gentleman.”
• If someone uses a title such as Dr. or Professor, then use it as well.
• Don’t shorten someone’s name without their permission, e.g. Michael may introduce himself as Mike.

It is respectful and courteous to try to remember names and to pronounce names correctly. Your attitude is key. No name is too difficult to pronounce. If you are unsure of the pronunciation, ask the person to repeat the name again. For example: “It is very important to me that I pronounce your name correctly. Could you repeat your name to me again, please?”

**Tips to Remember Names**

1. **Concentrate fully so that you can listen to the name and hear it properly.**
   • Clear your mind.
   • Face the person squarely if possible.
   • Maintain eye contact.

2. **Get a clear impression of the person.**
   • Look carefully for details about the person.
   • Make a quick impression — e.g. A grandfather, a business woman, a visitor from Australia, etc.

3. **Repeat the name in conversation, but do not overdo it.**
   • A rule of thumb here is that it takes a repetition of 5 times before the name “sticks” with you.
   • Be careful not to say the name so many times that it seems artificial.

4. **Use the name at your first opportunity after hearing it for the first time, and use it again when saying goodbye.**
   • Make sure you use eye contact.
   • This will immediately reinforce their name for you.

5. **Write the name down for future reference, or ask for a business card**
   • Sales people do this so well! When they meet someone they write their name down and a few details about them so they can remember them next time.
   • Helpful tip to do when on the telephone so that you can immediately address that person, using their name.
6. To assist you to grasp an unfamiliar name, spell it.
   - Helps you with accurate pronunciation.
   - Gives you a visual sense of the name. For example: Jon Thomson (John with no “h”; no “p” in Thomson)
   - May help if you ever have to correspond with the person.

7. Associate the name with something connected to the person; for example, their appearance, the meaning of their name, or something else that will trigger your memory.
   - Association is a personal matter.
   - Alliteration (having the first letters the same) works for some people. For example, Sean likes to ski so “skiing Sean” makes the connection.
   - Rhyming works for some people. For example, Chad is always smiling so “glad Chad” makes the connection.
   - Do not worry if the clue does not make sense to others. For example: Anne Sellars, a red-haired woman (like Anne of Green Gables) who owns a book store (Anne the book seller)

8. Break the name down so that you can pronounce it easily next time you say it.
   - Spelling the name as you think it might be pronounced, may help you to visualize and pronounce it correctly.
   - Writing down the pronunciation will eliminate the need to keep asking how someone pronounces their name.