

DOING BUSINESS: Merchant Alert
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Instead of Personally, Take it Professionally

Ever had a bad day? Who has managed to escape this event? When consumers are complaining, sales are down, and production slows, your own self-esteem is often on the line, not to mention, the service you provide to that next customer. If you solve the customer problem and land the big deal, you are a great person, even a Samaritan to some, and heaven help the person whom you perceive to stand in your way when you are on a mission to do good, in spite of a rotten mood. Right? But why?

As merchants and people, we spend much of our day thinking of ourselves. In fact, psychologists will tell you that on average we tell ourselves 14 negative messages to every 1 positive message. No wonder we take the things other people do so personally. One key to personal happiness and business success is to learn to take what customers say and of professionally, instead of personally.

There is far less “Us against them” out there than we imagine to be true of consumers. When you are a merchant, you are usually one in a long line of those who

have come before you to sell something. When a customer says or does something in your presence, or even to you, often it is a reflection on them, not you. Taking these actions professionally, not internalizing the reason behind them, will lessen the effect that they will have on your personal self-talk and may even brighten your mood.

Oh wait! Maybe I am assuming too much. You do have self-“talk” don’t you? Do you talk to your self? No? You can finish that conversation in your head before you answer. If you answer no, you just keep telling yourself that. Part of our reactions and responses to others, consumers included, is a direct result of what we are telling ourselves about their actions or words. He thinks we cannot run a business. She is avoiding my call because she is doing business elsewhere. Suppliers are raisin their prices on purpose just to ruin my day. Eighty-five percent of what we do is a result of our own messages and instead that is usually the percent, or thereabouts, that we blame on others. Malarky!

The best way to take other’s actions or words professionally, instead of personally, is to be aware of this imbalance. Fifteen percent of our behavior and thoughts truly come from other people’s reaction or behavior. Customers, people, friends, and family are too busy thinking all about themselves to spend time dreaming up ways to personally attack us or wreck our day. Very rarely is it all about us as we might like to imagine.

The time to take it professionally is anytime that there is another option besides the one that is damaging to you. Maybe your consumer is cranky because he was just served divorce papers. Maybe your supplier is slow to return your call because they are having cash-flow difficulties and are hesitant to tell you. Maybe, there is almost always a

maybe. There is also almost always a reason to take things professionally first, instead of personally. It could just be called part of doing business.