

**DOING BUSINESS: Merchant Alert**  
**Consumer Alert: 8<sup>th</sup> Article in 12 month series**  
**Word Count: 586**

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**Header:**

### **Little Things Change Things in a Big Way**

Ever had a bad day? Haven't we all? When you are shopping in a rush or meeting a pressure filled deadline, your own self-esteem is often on the line. If you find what you want or meet the deadline, you are a good person and heaven help the person who you perceive stands in your way. Right? But why?

As consumers 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 things other people do so personally. One key to personal happiness and a positive consumer experience is to learn how to change that average.

There is far less us against them out there than we imagine to be true of merchants. When you are a customer, you are usually one in a long line of those who have come before you to buy something. When a merchant says or does something in your presence, or even to you, often it is a reflection on them, not you. Taking these

actions professionally will lessen the effect they will have on your personal self-talk and maybe even brighten your mood.

Oh wait, let me back up. Do you talk to yourself? Come on, be honest 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, merchants included is a direct result of what we are telling ourselves about their action or words. “He thinks we cannot afford it.” “She is avoiding my call because she knows I am no fun to talk to.” “Company X over charged me on purpose just to ruin my day.” All of these and more are said inside some of our heads. Some are accurate, some are complete rubbish, but even those that are completely untrue have done the damage in our own mind usually before we take the time to verify their validity. 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.

The key to taking others’ actions or words professionally, instead of personally, is to be aware of the this imbalance, the one in which what we say in our head is more damaging than what is actually said or done by the person we are blaming for our state of mind. Fifteen percent of our behavior and thoughts truly come from other people’s stuff. Merchants, 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 as 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 sales rep didn’t call you back because she was swamped with someone else’s duties at the office, who has been out of the office

unexpectedly, not because she didn't want to talk to you today or wanted to ignore your request. Maybe company X overcharged you because their computer system needs updating and they lack capital to do so. 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.