



## Happy Customers: To Be or Not to Be

This is a tale of two cities ... and your customers. Actually, only one city and how it affects customers in several places, even where you live. It's a matter of policy, principle and being true to your school - or just giving the customers what they're asking for today. Which group are you in?

The city is New Orleans. Cajun, bayou, gumbo, hot, spicy, N'awlins. I do enjoy a trip there from time to time.

A few weeks ago my wife and I went to dinner at a restaurant in my city, Charlotte. It was a place we'll call King Creole (not the restaurant's real name). King Creole is committed to serving genuine Cajun dishes. And apparently to the extreme, even if it means disappointing the paying guests.

After ordering something hot enough to suck the breath right out of my lungs and give me that acupuncture feeling around my mouth and lower face, I asked for iced tea with my meal. Not just any iced tea, but sweet tea, a genuine southern specialty.

"We don't serve sweet tea," I was told by Brandon (not his real name), "just unsweet." As my eyebrows began to simmer from the shrimp and secret spices, I thought for just a second and then asked Brandon how long he'd worked here. "Almost five years," was his answer.

"Is there a day that goes by when you're not asked for sweet tea?" "Well, we get asked about it a lot," Brandon replied. I'll just bet. "If so many customers ask for it, why don't you serve it?" I continue the quiz. "Best answer I can give is they don't serve sweet tea in New Orleans."

True, but I'm not in New Orleans, I'm in Charlotte, where people drink sweet tea every day of the year. Brandon just shrugged. By now, I'm somewhere between disappointed and *cajun-hot* at this "letter of the law" delivered by my New Orleans

wanna-be. So I had water (lots of water). I leave puzzled and disappointed. Over something as simple as sugar in tea.

Last week, I'm off to dinner again in Port Orleans: The resort Orleans of Walt Disney World. My wife and I take the riverboat cruise to Downtown Disney and back to Port Orleans just for the ride, then decide to have a real sit-down meal at Boatwrights (yep, I'm using their real name cause they're about to do something uncommon).

It's Cajun cuisine and southern country cooking all rolled into one. Shrimp creole, red beans & rice and skillet cornbread and more. Real N'awlins flavor, real Disney service.

“What kind of questions are your prospective buyers asking? Are you listening? What do prospective buyers want that might make them your next customer?”

Tired of a day of soft drinks and water, I pose the sweet tea question, reminding myself of the fact that I'm no longer in Charlotte or even the south ... at least the part that's known for sugaring their tea.

"Absolutely!" was Katie's reply to the question I had mentally already answered in the negative. "What ... you have sweet tea here?" I asked almost shocked by my server's response. "Sure do," she said. "Would you like some? It's ice cold."

But I didn't answer. I still had another

question. "How is it that with a genuine Cajun menu and here in the middle of Florida, you serve sweet tea?" "*Because our customers ask for it.*"

What's the best reason for you or your business to do something you're not doing now? Because your customers ask for it! Good answer, Katie. How sweet it is! Because if you're really listening, you know they want it.

How do you win in this marketplace? In the NOW economy? Pay attention! If the customer's asking for it, why not give it to them if you possibly can? Instead of showing them a map, or quoting your policy, or protecting the sanctity of a far-away city; all the while disappointing the customer. When in Rome ... give the Romans what they ask for, if you can.

That's the Disney difference. Listening and serving and delivering what makes the guest feel good or feel better, while spending money at your restaurant, store, city or resort.

I may not expect to get sweet tea in New Orleans. But I also don't expect to be denied it in other places because they don't do it like I want it somewhere else. Especially when I'm here. What kind of questions are your prospective buyers asking? Are you listening? What do prospective buyers want that might make them your next customer? Where are you when it comes to sweetening the deal for your customers? Pay attention and they will tell you how to win them over. How sweet it is. Happy customers talk about how you did it! And tell everyone they know. Now go find your sugar.

Want Michael's short list on how you can sweeten the deal for your customers? Go to [www.autosuccess.biz](http://www.autosuccess.biz) and click on "Michael York's Sweet List!"

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