



Guest Blog

The impact of education on success

Do effective Sales professionals only come from certain countries?

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Ponder this: in countries that value selling skills, the customer gets what s/he expects and the satisfaction scores are high. Conversely, in countries that don't value selling skills, you get what the factory makes (or the services on the menu) and that's that.

Ever been to such countries? In which category is Britain? It's easy to think the UK is in the latter camp, given the "computer says no" TV dramatisations and legendary rail journeys where extracting a cup of tea is more than life's worth. However, as an American based in the UK for the past 25 years, Britain is miles ahead of its customer experience of 1988.

For example, there's the sandwich chain Pret-a-Manger which has perky staff eager to serve with a smile – and it's genuine. Compare this to Carphone Warehouse's rolls of stickers at the entrance to its stores in the late-1980's which you could wear while looking around: "Don't Bug Me – I'm Just Browsing".

You also now have most large grocery chains training staff to escort you to your elusive item rather than the *point-and-grunt* in a general direction as in the not-so-distant past.

So what's driven this shift in the British service culture? Is it that more of us have been to the US and admire the willingness to serve, even if it comes with a "have a nice day" greeting on the side? Or is it finally a recognition that good salesmanship directly translates into revenue and profits which finally trumps social class and the "just because I'm serving you doesn't mean I'm a servant so don't treat me like one" psychology of the 1950's?

As a judge of this year's Customer Collaboration Awards, I am delighted to have had so many applicants that recognise the financial results that come with professional selling and valuing the customer or client.

Even those who won't get an award on the night are still winners for making customers and their employers happy. Long may it continue!

Allyson Stewart-Allen was a judge at the National Sales Awards 2012.

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