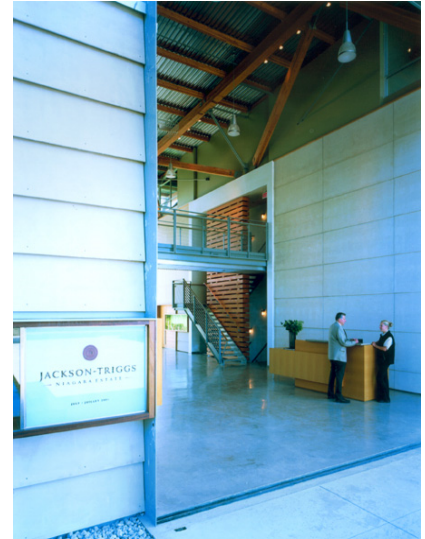


## CUSTOMER SERVICE APPROACHES

### The Hospitality Approach

Del Rollo admits he's probably got too many staff. At Jackson-Triggs Winery in Niagara, Canada, service is taken extremely seriously, and the 40-strong hospitality team ensures visitors are well catered for. On arrival, visitors check in at the concierge desk, where they are questioned to find out exactly what their needs are. Then they're directed appropriately to a tasting room, a tour or into the tasting gallery.

Like any good concierge desk, visitors are given advice on local tourism attractions, other wineries and places to dine and stay. Tour guides are known as Guest Services Associates and they're trained to conduct private tastings for the groups they host because they've got to know them along the way.



Creating a culture of service excellence begins with the recruitment and training process. Recruitment is by way of a job fair, whereby applicants are invited to attend on a particular day where they are pre-screened by existing staff. Quite often they are not from the wine industry at all. They could even be retirees who are more passionate about wine than simply making money. Successful applicants undergo an intensive two-week training period, shadow existing guides on tours and must fulfil a probation period.

The result is a highly passionate, dedicated team, intent on providing the best possible service and hospitality for in excess of 200,000 visitors a year.

### Why Judging your Customer Doesn't Pay

Here's an example of someone in the market to purchase a vehicle and how pre-conceived ideas by the salesperson ultimately lost him the sale.

It seems like a typical situation, where a husband and wife arrive at a car yard with the intention of purchasing a car. However, it's the wife who is actually the purchaser and the husband admits he knows very little about cars. The woman has done extensive research and knows exactly what she wants when she enters the car yard.

The salesperson approached the husband and asked what type of vehicle he was looking for. He replied that it was his wife who was the buyer on this occasion. So the man's wife informed the sales-person of her requirements, who referred to her as the "little lady" and continued focusing his attention on the man. Even when the man made it quite explicit that his wife was the one with the cash to purchase a vehicle, and he really should be paying attention to her requests, the sales-person continued to address him as if his wife was not even there.

By this time the man's wife was actually standing next to a car that fitted her needs exactly, but the sales-person refused to shift his attention. In frustration the woman appealed to her husband who simply said, "Well I guess you won't be buying a car here today?" and they left. Just one block away a more attentive sales person listened to the woman's requests and sold her the car she wanted.

Never assume who has the purchasing power, either in a couple or a group. Instead, take the time to listen carefully and respond directly to the person asking the questions.

[Contributed by Tony Moore, City Corporate Consultants]

## Sally's Story

Several years ago Sally happily consumed white and red wine on a regular basis, which was a big bonus as she also worked in the wine industry tending Cellar Door. Unfortunately, she also developed an intolerance to red wine that eventually led to such severe reactions that she couldn't even consume small amounts used in the cooking process. This could have spelled disaster for her cellar door career, but Sally had developed her cellar door skills to such an extent that she has proved an asset to many small and large cellar doors since.

So what's so special about Sally? She has great wine knowledge, and gets around her "disability" by relying more heavily on her sense of smell and quizzing other staff (and even customers) about the attributes of the reds she's pouring. More than that, she's got a natural, jargon-free way of relaying her knowledge, but can point out the finer points to the occasional wine connoisseur if she needs to. All good, but not especially remarkable.

Above all, Sally is a people person - and people know it. She's been around a while and can relate to a wide audience. Her personality is outgoing and her laugh infectious, but she's not so over the top that she turns people off. Unlike her slender 20-something compatriots in many of the places she's worked, Sally clearly enjoys the good life and makes no apologies. Her customers readily identify with her and after one of Sally's presentations, there's really no other option but to buy – or sign up to the mailing list – or head off for lunch to the restaurant where she's just booked them in – or usually all three.

Nothing's too hard for Sally either. She's been known to unload pallets from the truck, cork, capsule and label bottles when things are quiet, label and despatch wine to customers, update the database and remove dead vermin from under the fridge before customers start associating "mousiness" with the wine. She's utilised her kitchen hand skills from "another life" to help out the chef and whipping up a delectable cheese platter is a piece of cake.

But it all stops when a visitor walks in and the focus turns 100% to their wants and needs. She will happily seek feedback from customers about accommodation, food and other places they've visited and if she finds a gap, she fills it, adding her own (always positive) impressions too. Referrals from – and to – Sally, always pay.

And that's what sets Sally apart from many others fronting cellar door. She's passionate - not just about wine, but about life in general and also about her region. She makes it her business to know what other wineries are up to, what they offer, what's new. She's completed accredited training in her own time, sometimes using her own money. She attends local meetings, goes on famils to new B&B's, visits the local eateries. All in her own time, because, let's face it, it's social time too.

And it's not that Sally's 100% dedicated to wine. Indeed, she prefers a little food with her wine... What makes Sally so special is that she's an ordinary Australian woman, with a zest and passion for life and her region, and visitors can't help but buy a little piece of that to take home with them.