



# SkillSharpener Web Extra

## Fuel your day with positive energy

**Negativity getting you down? Are the pressures of everyday work in customer service, with demanding customers, high-pressure performance metrics, and complaining coworkers draining your energy and leaving you feeling exhausted at the end of your day?**

If so, then you are probably in need of a positive energy boost, according to Jon Gordon, author of *The Energy Bus*, and in many cases you're going to have to supply that boost yourself with a change of attitude.

"Positive energy is the currency of successful business, and of customer service in particular," says Gordon. Negativity, on the other hand, costs companies as much as \$300 billion per year, according to some estimates, in terms of lost customers, lost productivity, and employee turnover.

"Each person in an organization contributes to the collective energy and to the culture of the office or call center," Gordon says. "A negative person contributes to a negative feeling and a negative energy that's conveyed to the customer and can drive customers away. Positive energy, on the other hand, is something that people are drawn to. It attracts more business, and positive people produce positive results."

And the fact is, everyone has a choice about the kind of attitude they bring to the workplace. You can bring positive energy to work by maintaining a positive attitude with customers and coworkers, looking at problems as learning opportunities, and keeping the big picture in mind. Or you can

get caught up in the details, complain, and let your energy be drained away. In Gordon's terms: "You're the driver of your own bus."

### Make someone's day every day

The key to maintaining positive energy both for yourself and for your customers, says Gordon, is creating a vision or a purpose that is bigger than the job itself. If there is a departmental service vision that you can buy into, that's great. But in some cases you may have to create it yourself.

One of Gordon's favorites is to "be a memory maker," and by that he means that your goal as a customer service representative should be to "make someone's day every day."

### Dealing with obstacles and potholes

Every ride will have its challenges — flat tires, potholes, and the like — but these don't have to put an end to your journey, says Jon Gordon, author of *The Energy Bus*. You can turn challenges into positive opportunities, he says, by asking the following questions whenever you face an obstacle:

What can I learn from this challenge?

What is this problem teaching me and my team?

How can we grow from this adversity?

What opportunities does this challenge present to me and my team?



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"People forget — they forget what they read and what people say to them, but they remember the experience and the way they feel about something," Gordon says. "So it's important to create a positive emotional experience for customers that makes them feel good. Just getting customers to smile more is an accomplishment that will make them feel good about your company." And you do that, he says, by smiling yourself and maintaining a positive attitude even if customers are being difficult.

In fact, Gordon suggests that every rep should think of themselves as the CEO of their company — its "chief energy officer."

"Consider yourself empowered to share your positive energy with your customers," he says. "You may not in fact be the chief executive of your company, but you do have the ability to affect your customers and everyone around you by the positive energy that you are broadcasting out."

### Don't let customers drag you down

Difficult customers are a fact of life if you work in customer service, but you don't have to let them put a damper on your positive outlook. Again, says Gordon, you have a choice.

"Mahatma Gandhi said, 'I will not let anyone walk through my mind with dirty feet,' and I just love that because it's true," says Gordon. "We have a choice whether we let people affect us or not. It's a matter of not taking people too seriously. It's understanding that customers are just having their bad days, and not getting caught up in it."

And if you do find yourself getting caught up in it, deep breathing is one way to get back to your positive attitude, or reciting a positive mantra like "Too blessed to be stressed," or just smiling. "Another way," says Gordon, "is to think of what you are thankful for when you are dealing with a stressful

situation. You can't feel stressed and thankful at the same time."

### No complaining from coworkers allowed

Part of maintaining a positive attitude, Gordon says, is not letting yourself be affected by the negativity of others — what Gordon calls the "energy vampires" because their negative attitudes tend to suck the positive energy out of a workplace. "You don't buy into the negative energy of others," he says. "You don't indulge in mindless complaining yourself, and you don't take part in the mindless complaining of others."

"That doesn't mean that you can't take your challenges, or your problems, or your issues to the boss, or bring them up at a team meeting," says Gordon. "You need a healthy debate and healthy conflict. But it does mean that you are bringing it to the boss or to the meeting to debate the issue and then to come up with a solution — a way to deal with the issue so you can put it behind you."

As for coworkers who have a habit of complaining, "You just don't let them on your bus," Gordon says. "Their negative energy can sabotage morale, sabotage performance, drain your energy, and create an overall negative environment." By keeping a positive attitude in the face of coworkers' complaints and not letting yourself get caught up in their negative attitudes, you can help to reinforce a positive culture. And if enough people in an organization take that attitude, the complainers will eventually die out.

In the end, Gordon says, it's important to remember that "you're the driver of your bus, you give the bus its direction through your sense of mission and purpose, and you fuel the bus with your positive energy and the positive energy of those around you. Coworkers who don't share that energy can just get off at the next stop." ■

