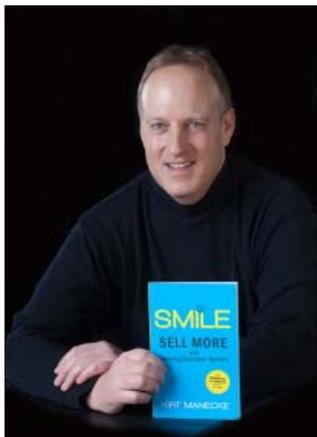


Milford Resident Releases Book on Customer Service



Left: Milford resident Kirt Manecke has released "Smile: Sell More With Amazing Customer Service," a book specializing in customer service.

The following are excerpts from an interview with Kirt Manecke.

Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your background in customer service?

"I used to be the co-owner of specialty retail store and we created a six-week training program because we knew as a start-up store, we couldn't afford to lose a customer ... So this training program taught our employees customer service and product knowledge. That store did really well because of its service. Without it, I don't think we would have lasted six months. I wrote my book based on the training program and it's a pithy condensed book that employees and employers can use to easily and quickly learn to delight customers."

Why did you decide to put out a book about customer service?

"I knew from our store what you need to do to have a successful store and to have customers come back. You have to train the employees ... and I ran into so many situations where that wasn't happening. People weren't saying hello, they weren't answering the phone properly. I saw there was a problem and I thought if I could condense all of my training information into a book that could be read in 60 minutes or less, I could make it easy for employers to help their employees. I wrote it just to be helpful, and for under \$20, something people could buy and easily train their staff."

Besides your training program, what is your experience in customer service?

"It was engrained in me that really it's just common courtesy. During college I worked at a wind surfing shop and I got some good customer service practice. After college I worked at some places that didn't have great customer service and I saw the money that was being lost from things like not saying thank you. I've just seen what happens when you have good customer service, and it's nothing extraordinary, it's just common sense. I just had a great foundation from reading and experience with good businesses that had good customer service and those who did not."

What kinds of things do you explain in your book?

"Customer service and sales. What I have is a top 10 in the first section of the book. If somebody reads the book and only does those top 10, they will be light years ahead of the competition. One of the tips is how to listen, and that is so important when you are selling. It also touches on how to answer the phone properly, how to ask for sales or donations, suggested selling and more. It really covers a lot of things that businesses are doing wrong and driving customers away."

Why do you think a book like this is important?

"Two reasons. Eighty percent of companies think they are providing superior customer service and only eight percent of their customers agree. Businesses in the United States lost \$83 billion due to poor customer service last year. I see poor customer service on a daily basis and it would be so easy to fix with this book. I think number one: we all experience it, and number two: its causing businesses to go out of business and this is a simple solution."

You put a lot on the line to produce this book. How did you feel?

"I was a little terrified. I thought 'am I wasting all my time?' I was worried and thought if this doesn't sell, what am I going to do? But I had a lot of help and couldn't have done this on my own. Without those 50 people, the book wouldn't be where it is."

If you could give one piece of advice to any employee or employer out there what would it be?

"Read this book. I also say hire people who genuinely care about people and train them. Hire for personality and train for skill. I think that's critical."

Kirt will be having a book signing May 4 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the Casa De Amici gift shop inside Colasanti's Market in Highland.

