



A Personal Note from Single Steps Strategies Founder Mary Grace Musuneggi

So What Is Your Business Saying??

Recently a few new businesses have opened in the area near our office. One beautiful afternoon, my business partner and I decided we would venture out for a walk and visit these shops.

The first one we came to had a name that would have indicated that it was a store where they sold decorative household items. But on entering the store, we discovered it was a women's accessories store. As we looked around no one greeted us, and the woman we perceived to be the owner stayed behind the counter and was talking to her friend about plans they were making for the weekend.

Feeling ignored, we finally left still not having been acknowledged, and with the message that customers were really not important there.

The next store we went to was a flower shop and the door way was block by a small gate. We peaked over the gate and did not see any sales person or owner. But we did see two small dogs who were running around – obviously the reason for the gate. Although I had to assume the owner was trying to keep the dogs in and not customers out, the message she was sending was just the opposite.

I called out “Hello” and she finally came out from the back of the building. She told us to move the gate or step over it and come in. As I did, one of the dogs managed to jump onto my leg with his nails digging into me and my pantyhose. The owner's response was a small laugh and a comment about how the dogs thought they owned the store. From all indications obviously they did.

To say the least, we left, with plans of not to return.

That afternoon I needed to call another company to place an order for a piece of equipment. When the phone answered the recording on the other end said that no one was available to take the call, but to press 0 if you are in need of immediate assistance. I pressed 0 only to hear a recording that said that 0 was not an option. To say the least I didn't bother to call them back, but instead I called a totally different company.

So in less than 24 hours I managed to attempt to do business with three companies who clearly were not interested in doing business with me, or anyone else for that matter.

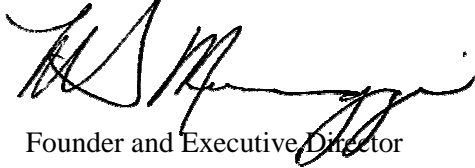
In working with small business we often hear from those that are struggling, that they are suffering with a bad economy or they can't seem to find enough customers. But maybe, instead it is the message that they are sending. Maybe their business is saying “We don't want to make it easy for you to do business with us,” or “We don't want you to think you are important to us.”

If they want to rise about the competition they need to do things to attract those buyers. On a recent trip to a nearby dress shop, I was greeted very cordially by the owner who told me her name, asked what my size was, showed me a few things in my size to ask if these might suit my style, and then she left me alone to explore the rest of the dresses she had for sale. On a recent business trip I was in a hotel where I was trying to find the restaurant. When I asked someone at the front desk for directions, instead of pointing the way, she actually walked me to the entrance of the restaurant.

These little extras give customers the feeling of being special and wanted. As customers, we love that and we should never settle for less. If we all had those expectations it would raise the quality of service we received everywhere.

But as business owners it should be standard procedure, business as usual, and no bad economic news, or competitor could stand in the way of our success.

Mary Grace Musuneggi

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary Grace Musuneggi', written over the printed name and title.

Founder and Executive Director

November 2008