

# Smart Talk

Insights from  
entrepreneurs

## JANINE ALLIS ON CUSTOMER SERVICE



**Smart Talk is a weekly column by successful entrepreneurs about the challenges they face every day. This week, Boost Juice founder and director Janine Allis, explains how her chain of juice bars managed to survive.**

● We get asked all the time, why is Boost Juice booming and why did the other 36 or more juice bars that started up 10 years ago disappear?

There is no single answer. However, there is an overall philosophy that we believe will give you a better chance to thrive.

It is really simple: find out what your customer wants and give it to them. How hard is that?

You know what, it's a great statement but very few businesses truly subscribe to the theory.

We never saw Boost as a money-making machine. I didn't even take a wage for the first few years, I was just so petrified of failing and losing everything.

You know the saying, four out of five businesses fail in the first five years, and I did not want to be one of them.

So we listened to our customers and asked them their opinions every chance we could. Sure our product was different; but what else did they want that we could give them?

These questions, along with a hundred others, we asked ourselves and our customers. It ended up being pretty simple; just a little love and making our customers feel that little bit better.

I wanted our service to be 10 times better than any other retailer. Today, with 232 stores around the world, we do not always get it right. In fact, we have made dozens (if not hundreds) of mistakes but we continue to challenge ourselves and be passionate about finding retail's Holy Grail of consistently achieving the best possible customer service.

So, we asked our customers questions. We put a sign up in every store asking them to email me personally if we did not deliver the product and service that we said we would, we call the customers by their names not a number, we thanked them for continuing to come back and made the 11th item free after every 10 purchases. We are genuine; we listen to what our customers have to say, we reply within 24 hours of receiving every bit of feedback, we continue to challenge ourselves every day. That's the reason we are still here.



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So in a practical sense for your business, set your standard at a high (achievable) level you think is right for your needs, then get angry and fix it when it's not met.

You could be a gun sales rep but if the gateway to your sales is through a receptionist who had a bad weekend and is just grumpy, you are behind the game before you even start.

There are a few points to remember.

You must have a curious mind and find out what your customers really want. If you don't really care to find out, then join the majority of people in management positions in companies in Australia today.

There are a number of key reasons that your business provides either a great or poor customer experience. Identify the negatives quickly and take action. Usually it is a people issue.

If your staff are happy and you have the right attitude towards them, then they will make your customers happy.

Make sure there is an avenue (or many) for the customer to tell you that they are not happy or what you are doing right and when they do, get back to them fast and fix it.

Do all the people in your business (whether staff or franchisees) understand your philosophy on customers? If not – fix it.

Ask yourself "Is our receptionist outstanding?" "How do we measure the customer's experience?" "What are the penalties for not achieving our benchmark?" "What catch phrase best encompasses your business?"

For Boost Juice it is "love life" and "having everyone who comes to a Boost store leave feeling a bit better".

The truth is no matter how good that smoothie, if a team member on the register is in a narky mood and gives poor service then that smoothie just won't taste quite as good as it should.

Second, you must be a vigorous leader to make sure no core company values get stuck in the top drawer. Display the vigour to care, the vigour to put measures in place, the vigour to have the courage to confront and expel poor experiences and banish them.

Can't be that hard, right? Well, that old saying comes back again: "If it was easy everyone could do it".

To get it right, you need to care. **BRW**

**Next week: John McGrath of McGrath Estate Agents**