



The Money Knot - your ka-ching newsletter from \$ensible Coaching

Welcome to the February, 2010 **Money Knot**, a newsletter with articles that bring you to the ka-ching.

Bringing the Ka-ching: Flexible Standards

I've been thinking a lot lately about something we might to label as Customer Service or Customer Satisfaction. I get fascinated by the way independent business people often shoot themselves in the foot around these issues. As a self employed person myself, I'm all too aware of what we all go through to get clients. We work hard at presenting our products and our selves in manners that will be appealing to others. Certainly, there is a great deal yet to learn about how to get clients. I'm more interested here in talking about how to keep them, or at least to not alienate them. Oddly enough, or maybe not so oddly, it is often a money issue that tips the scale, isn't it?

So, let's explore this some more. A fascinating thing I learned years ago, but that still eludes many small business owners is the FACT that if you make a mistake with a customer, and fix it well, you have more loyalty from that customer than if you hadn't messed up in the first place. What a wonderful idea. I can be a doofus, and make a mess, and if I clean it up in a timely and efficient fashion, I'll be lauded for it. Wow! And the opposite is also true. If I mess up, and leave the client in the lurch, I will definitely not be getting them back.

I've got a few examples for you to consider. I don't really mean to pick on contractors, but since we have used a couple lately, they come to mind. First we had a company that fixed the driveway at our old house. They did a great job, clean, on time, on budget. When we moved and needed a smaller concrete job, we called them first. We had to call them about four times before the person who we needed to talk with called us back. When he finally came to give us a bid, he tried to convince us of a very grandiose expansion of our project: "Let's take out the whole patio and redo the whole thing!" We called him back and asked for a quote on what we had said we wanted to begin with. He said he would quote that, but then he never called us back. I imagine he's sometimes puzzled at not having more business. He certainly won't have any more from us.

So then we get another contractor to do the work. Good bid, on time, good job. We paid him promptly, and called to ask for him to come back at do some clean up of the mess the concrete left. This was well within the scope of the

work, and he said he would be back in a couple of days to finish up, and we never heard from him or saw him again. It seems that once he had been paid, he disappeared. I make up that for him a good job is one he gets paid for, not one that is complete. He, too, will not get any more work from us.

A client told me a story recently of a situation in a department store where she shops. She's been shopping there for many, many years. They know her well. She came in and bought several items. One blouse she liked had a rip in the seam. They said "oh, we can fix that". So she asked if there would be a reduction in the price. They said "no, no one will ever know, it's on the seam". This didn't sit well with her. She didn't want to pay full price for a piece that was damaged, even if it got fixed. She refused the sale, but more importantly now has developed a very negative feeling about the store. By not fixing this situation well, they have damaged a very established relationship, and have probably lost money in the long run. It's not about who's right here: it's about understanding and accommodating your customer.

Do you want them to come back? Do you want them to refer you to others? Do you want them to have a positive experience with you?

Certainly, as an independent business person, you need to have standards. Those standards help the client to respect you. I have a friend in customer service who says it's about managing client's expectations, not meeting them. I think that's true. Help the customer to know what you expect. Set ground rules, set expectations. Set high standards. And then be flexible and accommodating.

Yes, you can do both. And you can do it around money, too. Let's talk about fees a bit. I charge a certain fee per session for clients. That's the fee. That's my standard. You can imagine that some people feel they can't afford my fee. How do I accommodate? How am I flexible? Well, in a variety of ways. I let the client decide how many times a month we will talk. I offer complementary sample sessions. I do free teleclasses. I have a liberal policy around schedule changes. I'm generous with my time and experience. And all the while I hold a standard and don't discount my fees. Flexible and accommodating. And yes, I let people know these things upfront. These, of course, are just examples, my examples. Holding to standards, yet being flexible can be done in many ways.

I truly think the thing that is missing is the goal, the standard, the mission statement piece around how to treat customers/clients. Seems to me like it's the good old Golden Rule. Treat others as would like to be treated. I'd like to know what to expect up front. I'd like to not be surprised. If I have a problem, I want to be treated respectfully, like my concern matters, and to be given some attention. I recently changed my business bank because I was tired of being ignored, stuck in phone trees, and regulated. I want personal attention, not rubber stamping. Don't we all?

So think about it: how do you treat your clients? What do your current actions with them say about your standards? Are there ways you are forgetting to make

allies of your clients? How can you be flexible and treat them like you'd like to be treated?

I really love to refer people to businesses and services I admire and respect, and ultimately, as I market my own business, that's what I'm doing. I'm referring others to me, because I believe they will get great value and service. Let's all strive to be able to do that, to be proud of how we treat each other.

Upcoming Events:

This month's Money Knot is about how, as business people, we sometimes shoot ourselves in the foot. Often, those unfortunate lapses in judgment are around our fees. Come explore how to truly understand your value to your customer/client.

Teleclass: Charge What You Are Worth

With the economy still bouncing around people are looking for deals, right? Not necessarily. People are looking for good value. What we charge and how we ask for it sets the tone of our work.

- 💰 Do you often find yourself tongue tied when people ask your fees or rates?
- 💰 Do you sometimes discount your rates even before you are asked to?
- 💰 Do you occasionally think that deserving people cannot afford you?
- 💰 Do you ever feel guilty about how much you charge?
- 💰 Have you ever thought that you would be a better person if you gave away your services?

This teleclass is an examination of how we often self-sabotage ourselves around our fees and our charges. In this class, we will start to untangle and shift your beliefs about your worth and value, and their affects on your fees and clients.

Date: Wednesday, February 17th

Time: 10:15am to 11:15 p.m. Pacific (1:15 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. Eastern)

Registration: at www.sensiblecoaching.com on the contact page

Fee: FREE...your only cost for this teleclass is your regular long distance call charges.

The teleclass format is interactive. When you register, you will receive a phone number and a PIN. All you need to do is call the phone number at the time of the call. When directed, punch in the PIN number and you will be on a conference type call with the other participants. It's that easy.

Ka-ching!

Shell Tain, pcc, cpcc
Sensible Coaching
503.258.1630
shell@sensiblecoaching.com
www.sensiblecoaching.com

The Money Knot Story:

In case you are wondering why this is called **The Money Knot**, here's the story. I've always been fond of Celtic knots, and you notice I use one as my logo. From my perspective, there are several things about these knots that relate to our money journey. One, you can see the whole knot; nothing is hidden, it's all revealed. Two, the knot has no beginning and no end; it's an ongoing, dynamic process. Three, the knot that I have chosen is a bit askew; our maneuvering is often out of the box.

Our money lives are like this knot. They are a visible maze that is intricate and sometimes challenging. Sometimes we get stuck in a corner; sometimes money is confusing, embarrassing or even scary. And yet the knot is always there. It's a never ending relationship.

Together we go into your knot, and I help you to understand and maneuver through the knot. You will get familiar with the territory, know your way around, understand the twists and turns. Together we will make sense of where you are on your own personal money path and help you get to where you want to be.