

Nugget of the Month: *Improving your Business* *Customer Service & Communication*

We continue our four-part series on Customer Service with an article about Communication -- effective, friendly and memorable exchanges that will leave the best impression of your company and its services with your clients. After all, clients have friends, and their friends can end up being your next customers.

What is Communication?

There are actually two aspects to communication. The first, of course, are the verbal words that are actually spoken. But this only involves 6-7% of what is conveyed. The other 93-94% of the exchange are the nonverbal cues such as body language, hand gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, or anything not about the words that are spoken.

Ideally, when we communicate with our customers, the message spoken or conveyed is exactly the message that the client hears or receives. But in reality, listeners will usually pay more attention to the nonverbal aspects of what is being shared rather than the meaning of the words that are said. At the same time, speakers will focus more on the words and not pay attention to their body language. This is important to remember especially on the jobsite, because you could, for instance, be unconsciously pointing to something arbitrary, focused on your



own words, and the client will be paying attention to the gestures you are making and not be fully hearing what you are saying.

Body Language

How do our clients read us while we are trying to communicate with them? Having observed workers out in the field, here are some problematic gestures which clients misinterpret:

- Shuffling your feet because you might be nervous.
- Ignoring them, not looking them in the eyes, or not giving them your full attention because you might be distracted with what is happening around you.
- Your arms are folded, which indicates a defensive posture and you are guarded.
- You slouch which might mean that you are not interested in what the client is saying.

Here is a more effective way of communicating with your client:

- Look them in the eyes. This shows you are confident, you and the client are equals, and you are capable.
- Stand still and comfortably. Try to relax in their presence, and find a comfortable distance when you are speaking with them.
- Face them and make sure to direct your attention to them.
- Address all the parties, not just one. Do not play favorites and make assumptions about your customers (i.e. the husband may do all the cooking or the wife may be the bread earner).

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- Stop working. If you're in an environment where you cannot stop working, make a point to say so, and reschedule your conversation with them. You do not have to drop everything just because a client wants to speak with you, but make sure you address them when they ask for your attention.

Your Voice

The way you say your words and the inflections you use have a significant effect on how your message is received. Here are some tips on how to speak effectively:

- Speak slowly in a calm, soothing, smooth, and reassuring tone.
- Speak clearly and respectfully.
- Use words they understand and clarify things with them so you know they understand what you want to convey.
- Call people by their names.

Do not use unfamiliar or technical words they may not understand, or words with double meanings. Withhold from using curse or swear words as this solidifies a "blue collar" stereotype of the construction worker. Make sure to emphasize this to your team, too.

This is only one aspect of the exchange – how you express yourself. Next month we delve into the best way to listen and what to notice about what you're interpreting when you are trying to understand what your client is saying.

This article is a continuation of last month's series about Customer Service based on a web seminar by Tim Faller, author of "The Lead Carpenter Handbook: The Complete Hands-On Guide to Successful Jobsite Management," and founder of Field Training Services, a firm that trains production staff in good job-site management and helps companies develop training programs for their field staff.

Lot Sale Trends in Larimer County*

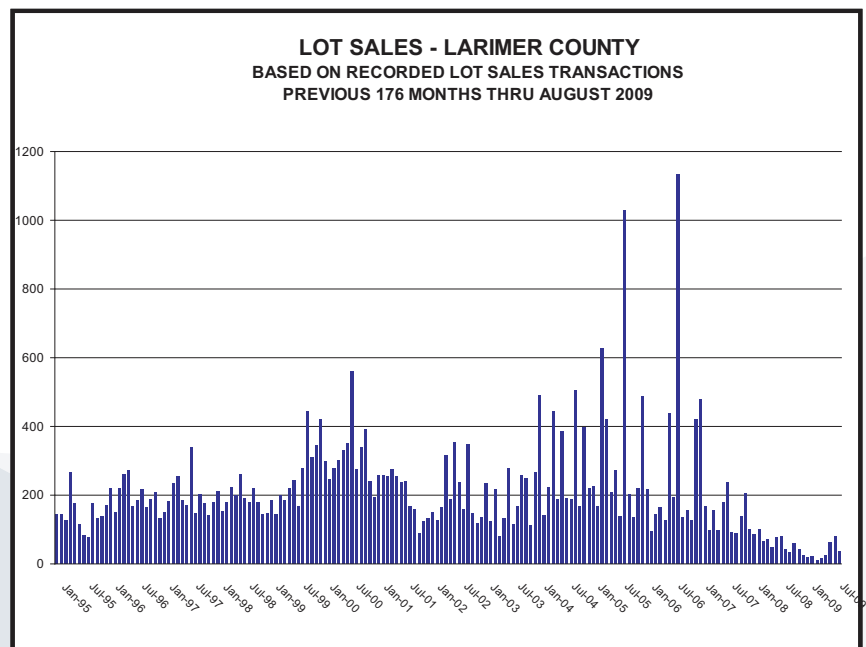
The top five Lot Sales in Larimer County are as follows:

- 1) Stonebridge Estates, Estes Park CO
- 2) Loveland/Ft Collins Industrial Airpark, Loveland CO
- 3) Millenium Northwest 1, Loveland CO
- 4) Harmony 2, Timnath CO
- 5) Timnath South, Timnath CO

Significant buyers in the area include: Stonebridge Estates, Centerra Properties, Western LLC, Western Slope Mineral Co, and Province Inc.

The top five selling subdivisions since January 2009 in Larimer County are currently:

- 1) Sidehill Condominiums, Ft Collins CO with 26 sales
- 2) Provincetown 3, Ft Collins CO with 19 sales
- 3) Maple Hill, Ft Collins CO with 12 sales
- 4) Timnath South, Timnath CO with 10 sales
- 5) Thompson River Ranch, Loveland CO with 10 sales



*As reported by Home Builders' Research.