

Are your travel customers talking to themselves?

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Recently I went to grab a quick meal at a local fast food establishment and I gave very simple instructions... no mayonnaise or cheese on my hamburger. Simple. My meal came and sure enough, there was not just a little mayonnaise but loads of mayonnaise and a slab of cheese on top. The counter person took my order but was she really listening?

In just about any business you are going to encounter people who just don't listen. We as customers are talking to ourselves because they hear but are not listening.

There are two kinds of salespeople. The order taker and the learned salesperson. The order taker just inputs the information on the computer or writes down just enough information to get the job done. I got my burger didn't I? The true salesperson will qualify, profile and not only ask questions but will listen.

While it only costs me \$6.00 for my hamburger, I will eventually get over the fact that the order taker did not follow my lead, did not listen and ultimately did not give me what I really wanted. Will your travel customer easily get over the disappointment when they wanted a nice, intimate romantic weekend and you sent them on a weekend at a hotel that while it was in a nice location, the rooms booked overlooked the dumpsters. Listening to the customer, in this case, gives the agent the perfect opportunity to sell up and give the customer what they really want ~ an affair of the heart with someone special. *"Take a room with an ocean view or with a view of the night lights in the distance. Picture yourselves on the balcony with a nice beverage watching the sun set or perhaps have a room service breakfast on your balcony cozied up in your fluffy terry cloth robes provided by the hotel."* Now that is selling relaxation and romance. You get that kind of experience in the right hotel and in the right rooms.

Listening requires hearing what your customer says. Listening requires understanding what they mean. Ask questions if you are not sure. Listening requires attention and focus. This means not typing on the computer or texting while on the phone with a customer. Listening is a strong skill to master in all areas of life.

Set yourself apart from the order takers. Be the best you can be as a travel professional. Paying attention pays. The best reward to listening to the customer is repeat business, referrals and greater commission!

Keith Powell is a renowned travel industry speaker and author with 25 years of experience in the business. He's crisscrossed the globe from Bangkok to Cannes, from Rio de Janeiro to Vancouver presenting programs both domestically and internationally. Known as "The Business Revivalist," Keith has presented to client groups ranging from associations and airlines to cruise lines and Fortune 500 companies. His book "The Transforming Power of Achievement" is available at www.keithpowellspeaker.com .