

Orchard House Communications

A quarterly newsletter  Spring 2006

The Value of Repeat Customers

We've probably all heard of the 80-20 rule, which states that 80 per cent of our business comes from 20 per cent of our customers. That 80 per cent likely comes from repeat customers, people who return to us every week, month, quarter or year.

These are tremendously valuable customers, not only for the volume of business they do with us, but because of the time they save us and the confirmation they give that our work is good.

Repeat Customers Save Time

Because they're a known quantity, our repeat customers save us time and effort. They know what we offer, how we prefer to work, what our price and payment terms are, and how we prefer to proceed. There aren't likely to be nasty surprises on either end.

Finding new customers is hard work. While we should all make regular efforts to do this, it can be a long process from first contact to completed transaction. Repeat customers are past this stage. They know what they want from us, and that we can deliver. That's why they return.

Repeat Customers Confirm Our Worth

Unless you get a comment of appreciation or a referral from a satisfied customer, the only way you may know that a customer has been happy the

last time, is when you're asked to do more work.

Of course, you could have satisfied a customer completely, but if you never hear back from your contact, you always wonder what happened. Did they find a better supplier? Did you disappoint them in some way? Was it something you said, or didn't say? Vanishing customers usually remain a mystery, while repeat customers are solid gold.

Repeat Customers are Worth a Relationship

The more your customers work with you, the better you get to know each other. The more this happens, the easier your dealings can become. When the professional relationship is respectful, trusting and relaxed, the work process can go smoothly and lead to better results. This kind of relationship is worth nurturing.

Thank you!

This article is meant as a thank-you

note – even a love letter – to all of you who continue to ask me to write or edit for you. I cherish my repeat customers, and hope it shows.

To those of you who haven't yet dealt with me as repeat or even first-time customers, do get in touch! My repeat customers can't be wrong. They know a good thing when they see it. My office is open; I am still accepting new, and especially repeat, customers. You will be welcome.

Snap Judgements of Your Web Site

In the Winter issue of this newsletter, I wrote about the home page of a Web site being the most valuable piece of real estate in your whole site.

On Jan. 13, 2006, nature.com, which describes itself as "the best in science journalism," published an article by Michael Hopkin reporting that Web users judge a site within the **first 20th of a second**. Were you even aware that we can think that quickly?

Researchers expected viewers to make judgements after 500 milliseconds, the report continues, but they discovered that it took no more than 50 milliseconds. More amazing is the finding that "their verdicts tallied well with judgements made after a longer period of scrutiny."

This aligns with "The Power of First Impressions," an item in the Summer 2005 issue of this newsletter, in which I reported on students' ability to evaluate

a teacher's effectiveness within two seconds of viewing a silent (!) videotape of the teacher. Their decisions mirrored those of students who had sat through a full semester with the teacher.

Are we all brilliant? Evolution has perhaps selected for the ability to make

correct snap decisions in the face of danger, and we use that trait for everything we see.

It only emphasizes, with scientific findings, the need for communications materials to be dead on. If they aren't, we could be dead wrong.

Not That I'm Psychic...

...but I can't help noticing that two of the authors of *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* are apparently suing the author of *The Da Vinci Code* for copyright infringement. The Summer issue of this newsletter also contained an article that examined the 1982 non-fiction bestseller as the basis for the current book.

My next predictions: courts will decide that no copyright infringement has occurred, because you can't copyright an idea, only the expression of an idea. And *The Da Vinci Code* is far-out fiction, about to become a smash hit film starring Tom Hanks. (Okay, the only prediction in the last sentence is that the movie will be a hit. And that's hardly a wild guess.)

I love Dr. Phil, but sometimes his Texas talk doesn't quite make sense:

"Parents need to fill a child's bucket of self esteem so high that the rest of the world can't poke enough holes in it to drain it dry."

Letters to the Editor Continue!

"I loved Mark Ellwood's comments on language in your Winter newsletter. He's right on!"

Catherine Watson

Editor, *Education Today*

www.opsba.org/pubs/et/education_today.html

Mark Ellwood of Pace Productivity Inc. (www.getmoredone.com) had objected to the unnecessary lengthening of words.



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Branimir carried by digital art store

Branimir's creative art work is now easily available for purchase through AMK Ideas Unlimited, a digital art store at eBay, starting for a limited time at \$35 for a print. Thumbnail sketches of his limited-edition digital art prints are provided at stores.ebay.ca/amk-ideas-unlimited. Here's just one example of his work:



Transfixed – inspired by Salvador Dali's Corpus Hypercubicus. Fascinated with multiple dimensions, not only spatial but emotional as well, Branimir uses a master's setup for his own explorations. This is a limited edition of 50 prints sized 20 x 20 inches (508 x 508 mm) and printed on highest-quality ink-jet glossy photo paper, signed and numbered by the artist. A Certificate of Authenticity is included with the print.

As Seen on TV!

On March 10 I appeared on TV for the first time ever. The CTS TV show *Behind the Story*, hosted by Richard Landau, was a roundtable discussion of how the media reports on our environment.

I had been a last-minute addition to the show, but I jumped at the invitation to appear. I was sent 58 pages of research material to read in less than 24 hours, which actually worked in my favour by not giving me time to be nervous.

I hoped that I would benefit from a complete Oprah-style makeover of hair and make-up, but instead, I was painted like a cadaver. To my surprise, I really did look normal on TV. The camera lights must drain all the real colour from your face.

I had no idea what I would be asked, so I had to concentrate hard and think on my feet. While this wasn't easy, it also gave no opportunity for jitters.

If you ever get the chance to appear on TV, even a cable or community channel, I encourage you to take it. More people than you think might view the show. And I was asked if I would like to return some time, so I guess I did all right.

Branimir Zlamalik

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