

The Number 1 Rule for Businesses - Be Professional

By Denise Hall

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Have you ever walked into a store and things looked sloppy? Stores should have nice neat displays, right? Normally, yes, but sometimes they get a bit messy on busy days and we all understand how that can happen.

But what if you were to walk into a store as soon as it opened in the morning and the place looked like it had been ransacked? What would you think?

You'd probably think it wasn't very professional-looking. If a rack of shirts was haphazardly thrown together, with all the styles, colors and sizes mixed up, you'd probably walk right past it without giving it a second glance.

If a sales associate wouldn't answer your questions or help you find something, you would consider that unprofessional, too, not to mention rude.

When we do business in the offline world we expect a professional appearance and professional manner from those who deal with customers. The same is true for online businesses.

Your business depends on how professional you are. Your website, your customer service and the appearance and quality of your work all reflect upon you, the business owner.

Two key factors of professionalism:

1. Good Customer Service/Relations

2. Quality Appearance and Writing Skills

Recently I had problems submitting information to several websites. After trying for several days I finally e-mailed for technical support. (After all, the website owners had messages posted that said to contact them at any time.)

I didn't expect an immediate reply to my inquiries. I know they're busy running their businesses, and dealing with other people, too. But I have yet to receive any replies.

Where is the customer service? Why would I want to do business with someone who seems to be ignoring me? At the very least, if it typically takes them more than a couple of days to reply to e-mail, support questions or other requests, they should post that information on their website so customers/visitors know what to expect.

Without good customer service, you're shooting yourself in the foot. Don't expect customers to buy from you if you can't afford them some common courtesy.

A professional appearance is mandatory to your business, also. How many times have you read an ad or article that had numerous spelling or grammatical errors?

We're not perfect. We all make mistakes. But if we frequently had those little red check marks on our composition papers in school, we should probably use spell check and have someone proof-read our copy before sending it into cyberspace.

A prime example is a website I visited a few months ago. As I started reading about the product the owner was selling I noticed an error with the use of the word "our." The site said "When you use "are" product....." OK, one little mistake. No big deal.

However, as I continued reading, I discovered the webmaster referred to "are" products and "are" website on the whole page! Not once was the correct word, "our," used.

Frequently I read ads and articles that contain many spelling or punctuation errors. For instance, "Thinking back to when I first started my business. I had no idea how or where to begin."

I'm not a teacher, but I can see that it should be one sentence, not two. The writer cut off the first sentence before actually finishing it. It's like the train of thought came to a screeching halt. (In this case, I'm the writer giving you an example. So if this sentence resembles

someone else's work, it was not done intentionally.)

The correct way to write it is "Thinking back to when I first started my business, I had no idea how or where to begin." It's one flowing sentence. Now it tells you what I was thinking.

Another option is to change it just a bit to make it a complete sentence. "I think back to when I first started my business" or "I remember when I first started my business." Then continue to the second sentence.

I'm not wanting to demean anyone or be overly picky. Ads, web pages and articles just look much more professional when written with no errors, or at least very minor ones.

Many customers will shy away from a website or ad that seems poorly written or put together. The customer may see the business owner as an amateur, therefore their product, company or service may not be worth much.

Do your customers expect perfection? No. But they do expect professionalism. You're running a business, so you're supposed to be a professional. If you give a professional appearance, they'll believe in you and your business.

Denise Hall is the publisher of Home Business on a Budget Newsletter. Her weekly publication contains helpful tips, articles and resources. To subscribe mailto:home_business_on_a_budget@rapidreply.net or visit <http://www.home-business-on-a-budget.com>

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