

# Wrapping Yourself Around the Customer

By Carol Verret

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Isn't that a great customer service philosophy? My friend Bill McBain with Benjamin West sent me an email following the last newsletter about his meeting with his staff and their philosophy of 'wrapping yourself around the customer.' (Its nice to know that someone is reading it - feel free to contact me with your comments.)

The concept of wrapping ourselves and our company around our customers is a concept that bears some elaboration. For the sales staff it means keeping clients close and happy, following up in a timely basis and executing contracts quickly and efficiently. There is an old saying that one should feel close enough to their contacts at key accounts that they would feel comfortable going to their house for dinner and vice versa. You don't actually have to do that but the level of familiarity should be such that your clients will communicate with you when there is a problem at your property or when they have been approached by a competitor at a lower rate.

The entire operation wraps themselves around their customers by providing consistently good customer service, dealing with customer complaints in a prompt and satisfactory manner and responding to special requests on a timely basis. Every member of the staff should be familiar with who the top accounts are and the name of the key contacts -- the people who really sign their paychecks. This is key when a client has a problem outside of the manager's hours. I worked with a hotel once that took pictures of their best and most regular customers and posted them on a board in the front office so that every member of the staff knew who they were and what they looked like.

The key is to wrap yourselves around your customers so that you retain them and keep their business as a base while you solicit new customers to wrap yourself around and increase market share and yield.

Bill McBain and his staff have done it exactly right and that could be one reason why his business is flourishing at a time when many hospitality related businesses are floundering.

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Carol Verret, Owner of Carol Verret Consulting & Training, is a twenty-year veteran of the hotel industry. She arrived in Denver in 1984 in the midst of an economic downturn and quickly established herself as an expert in sales and marketing in hotel turn-around situations, applying her formula for REVPAR improvement. To learn more about Carol Verret, Consulting and Training, visit her web site at <http://www.carolverret.com> Be sure to subscribe to our free monthly newsletter, ResultsWoW Sales and Customer Service newsletter. <http://www.carolverret.com/resultswow.htm>  
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