



# What Does MAGIC Really Mean?

Up to this point, we've used the term MAGIC to describe a truly positive and memorable customer experience. And, to a certain extent, we've hinted at what that term implies. Now we'll move on to the details.

MAGIC is an acronym for **M**ake **A** Great **I**mpression on the **C**ustomer. This is a straightforward concept; everyone in business wants to interact positively with customers and clients. You want them to feel good about what you do and how you do it. You want that feeling to be so persuasively positive that the thought of doing business with you again isn't even a debatable point—of course they're going to come back!

The same is true of your personal life. If you enjoy someone's company, you're naturally going to want to extend that relationship into the future.

But MAGIC is about more than just positive interactions. It is also about managing perception. It's been said that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and nowhere is that more applicable than in your communications with others. The quality of your communication—be it with customers, friends, or family members—is really measured by how others perceive you.

You must make a choice—the choice to manage that perception, create a “quality” interaction, and make a great impression on the other person. Once you have made that choice, positive behavior follows.

## MAKING THE CHOICE TO BE MAGIC

The importance of choice is the first central concept of MAGIC—one that you will see repeated as you proceed through the material. Perhaps the best way to illustrate the power of choice is to start off with a short anecdote:

It was four days before Christmas, and I had a minor emergency. I backed my car into a rock and needed the car fixed right away. My insurance company was of little help, and they were anything but empathic. I found a local mechanic, Bill, with whom I had no previous experience.

Not only did he repair my car, erasing all the remnants of the rock, but he personally delivered it to my front door on Christmas Eve. Here's the clincher: I hadn't even asked him to do so. As if he thought nothing of it, he simply said, "I didn't want you to be without your car for the holiday; and I know you have guests, so I brought your car to you."

Bill's demonstration of exceptional service and regard for me as a person is the essence of respect and accountability that warms my heart. I can say, without reservation, that the next time my car breaks down I will not do business with anyone else but Bill.

In this story, Bill did everything he was supposed to do. He fixed the customer's car, and he did an excellent job of it. It's very likely that the customer would use Bill's services again even if he had done nothing more. However, because Bill made the choice to go the extra mile—outside of his job description—and relate personally to the customer, there is no doubt that when this customer's car breaks down again, he will bring it straight to Bill. Bill is a perfect example of someone choosing to be MAGIC.

The principle of choice applies to more than just choosing to go above and beyond what is expected. Choice is at the heart of effective communication, particularly in challenging or awkward circumstances. People at work often must take control of a negative situation and choose to turn it around. Instead of accepting style differences or misunderstandings as insurmountable, you can make a choice to improve the situation. You choose how to respond: to get angry or to listen and empathize before you respond.

For example, let's say that a customer is upset about something. He doesn't like your response, so he becomes angry and lashes out at you. Here's where choice comes into play. You can fuel the fire of his anger by responding in kind. Or, making a different choice, you can look past his seemingly irrational behavior and focus on helping him. In order to improve the situation, you choose to really listen to him and empathize with what's behind his emotion.

Many people are ineffective communicators because they choose to believe that there's simply no viable alternative. In this book, we'll show that there are more choices available, regardless of the situation.

## COMMUNICATING WITH THE CUSTOMER IN MIND

Another aspect of the MAGIC mind-set is to relate to people in a way that is respectful and accountable. You never distort or sugarcoat the truth when talking to customers, but you keep your focus on the goal at hand: bringing the customer closer to a solution.

When you communicate with the customer in mind, you take a collaborative approach instead of sending an “us versus them” message. People who use a confrontational approach are more prone to quote policies, procedures, and the “company line” when it proves expedient to do so. You've undoubtedly heard the signs of the us-versus-them approach before:

“That's not the way we do things here!”

“You should have followed the directions!”

“Why did you do *that?!?*”

“If you had filled the form out right in the first place, you wouldn't have this problem.”

“We didn't make a mistake—you did!”

After all, if you see yourself on one side of the fence and the customer on the other, it's awfully tempting to say almost anything to get her off the phone. You feel no sense of obligation to do otherwise.

To move beyond us-versus-them thinking, you need to remain open and receptive in every interaction, no matter how frustrating. Setbacks are completely understandable, and some are unavoidable. However, to avoid unnecessary upset,

you must get in touch with your “hot buttons”—those customer responses that drive you crazy and trigger an emotional response. Some people react strongly when they hear emotion-driven accusations, such as “Don’t you people know what you’re doing?” or “You made a mistake on my statement again!”

MAGIC is about framing communication in the context of community, with a strong sense of relationship and connection between you and the customer. With commitment and practice, you’ll find yourself choosing better responses naturally.

## **PRACTICAL TO THE UTMOST**

A third aspect of MAGIC is its practical value. “Feeling good” isn’t the only result of good communication; your business benefits when customers can express their needs to you and you can meet their needs. Any interaction, no matter how small, can be transformed from something ordinary to a memorable exchange that creates satisfaction and loyalty.

Let’s say you’re on the phone with a customer who is quite frustrated about receiving an inaccurate order. You acknowledge his experience of the situation—his frustrations. Then, working in concert, you address the problem quickly and efficiently. Your customer is relieved that you understood and that you “got” his frustration, and is pleased that the right order is now in the pipeline. And you’re happy that the customer is genuinely satisfied.

Is that the end of the story? Not likely. By establishing a MAGIC relationship with a customer, you’ve cemented a connection that will influence that customer’s choices in the future, just as Bill the mechanic did in the story at the beginning of this chapter. What customer wouldn’t want to deal with a person or company whose every action reflects a commitment to service and integrity?

## **A Tragic Moment**

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Let’s take a firsthand look at how your choices can affect the customer’s experience and decision to do business with you again in the future.

“I went to a fancy frozen yogurt store in an upscale Boston mall that I passed through every day on my way to and from work. My mouth was watering for a certain chocolate flavor in the case. But the young lady behind the counter said, ‘No, you can’t have that. What else do you want?’ She gave no explana-

tion as to why she wouldn't give me the flavor I wanted. However, after some probing from me, she admitted it was too hard for her to scoop out. I then suggested she try running the scoop under hot water in the back of the store and then try again. She did that with a look on her face and, in the most perfunctory manner, made one quick attempt to scoop the chocolate and gave up. She said, 'No, can't do it. What else do you want?' As a final attempt (because I really wanted that chocolate), I suggested she put the container on the counter to soften up a bit. She refused and asked for the third time, 'What else do you want?' It didn't matter to her that I was a frequent customer.

"I walked out with nothing, but decided to return the next day to see if anyone else would help me. Fortunately for me, a young man was on duty. I told him what had happened the day before. He said, 'Ma'am, I'm not leaving until I get you that yogurt!' and immediately got it for me. However, he offered no apology and did not compensate me with extra yogurt or offer it free. Nevertheless, I would go back again simply because he said he would talk to the young lady who had annoyed me so much. Who knows if he ever did, but the thought that he might set her straight comforted me as a customer."

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## MAGIC **Maxims**

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- MAGIC emphasizes relationships—not an us-versus-them attitude.
  - MAGIC encourages self-awareness and learning so that you always put forth your personal best.
  - MAGIC is not about sugarcoating or being nice for niceness's sake. It is about adopting a mind-set and gaining the skills necessary to interact effectively with others.
  - MAGIC empowers you with choice. You can choose to be MAGIC or tragic in any situation—it's up to you.
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