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Customer

A customer's interpretation of any experience they have had will be based largely on whatever TNTs they at the time observed and how those TNTs added up and made them feel. We humans may struggle to take on board big things but what we are really good at doing is observing lots of little things, cumulative things that build impressions or corroborate our preconceived expectations.

Like most people, I live a fairly hectic life. Weekdays in particular are spent running around, juggling work and family, giving everything my best shot, most of the time remaining below radar, pretty much unnoticed. The level of customer service I receive tends to fluctuate between nondescript and okay, with the disappointing experiences sadly being, for the most part, the most memorable. The occasional, really good TNT experiences that I do have are few and far between and are the much-cherished exceptions that I can count on one hand over the space of a year. The reality being that, for the majority of the time, I am made to feel invisible, frequently getting the distinct sense that I am merely being robotically 'dealt with' or 'processed', rather than being 'served'. But, being so busy and just wanting to move on, I tolerate it, and having been exposed to so much of it for so long, I've got used to it, I've become immune. Mediocre service has become the norm, it is what I expect.

For those of us trying to differentiate ourselves by putting customers at the heart of everything we do and deliver stand-out service for all the right reasons, this really is fantastic news! If everyone was getting the TNTs right and blowing our socks off all the time, it would make standing out extremely difficult. However, with non-engaging, faceless service being so ubiquitous and people's expectations so low, there is now, more than ever before, an enormous opportunity that is ripe for the taking. When we do show how much we care by making time to do all the little things that we don't need to do, the more impactful they are, the more bowled over people are, and the more they go away and tell others about us. All sparked off by a few simple, zero-cost TNT actions. With so many organisations out there sleepwalking, doing things the way they've always done them, seemingly content with merely 'meeting' uninspired expectations, it's no wonder great TNTs have become so scarce. What so many businesses just don't appear to understand is that the tiniest of positive human interactions is all it takes to initiate some wonderful, lasting relationships and for them to be regarded as being outstanding because people love interacting with them.

The best news of all though about being outstanding is that you don't have to stand out way beyond any of your competition; you only have to stand out by the smallest of fractions. With most market sectors being so ultra-competitive, the reality is you'll probably never ever be streets ahead of your closest competitor – you don't need to be. So long as you are just one shoe size step ahead, you're ahead – and you will stand out!

What separates the few and far between organisations who have gained world-class reputations for creating an exceptional experience is that they know it's all about one thing – it's about going beyond their customers' expectations. With this at the forefront of their minds, all their people are motivated to continuously and proactively look for TNT opportunities to surprise and delight customers. They understand that, by always viewing

themselves through the eyes of their customers, they are able to anticipate and then exceed expectations and that, each time they do that, that's when the magic happens. That's when a TNT detonates. A BOOM! is heard, and another customer goes away with their face beaming in delight. It not only makes the customer feel great, it makes them, the service provider, feel good too. Their days become so much more enjoyable, the weeks fly by and what they do for a living no longer feels like a job. And here's the key – this will only ever happen if all your people fully grasp this. They have to really want to make customers feel special, and the sooner they realise that by doing so, they too will feel several inches taller, the quicker it will happen.

The expression 'we treat our customers like old friends that we've not seen for a while' is one I hear over and over again from those who are passionate about customer care. When looking after customers, what is critical is that everybody in the team be not only committed but also accountable for doing it. Absolutely everyone needs to play their part and take ownership for doing their bit. No matter what their job title or level of seniority, everyone in the team needs to be permanently primed and ready to anticipate any potential needs a customer may have – every customer touchpoint moment needs to be seen as an opportunity to shine and stand out. No matter how hard an entire army of people may work behind the scenes, no matter how good the reputation that precedes them is or how deeply they may actually care, it only takes one TNT encounter with one slightly disengaged individual staff member to start painting a very big, memorable negative image. Every single person, whether they are customer facing or non-customer facing needs to be onboard and fully tuned into exploring ways to gently apply extra, subtle touches – thereby surpassing customer's expectations. In fact, I would go even further and say that it is probably more important that people perceived as being 'backroom staff' need to be more aware of TNTs and the effect they can have. There are two

reasons for this. First, when a customer does get an occasional peek behind the scenes, the things they get to glimpse tend to carry far more weight in their minds because they feel they are witnessing a true, honest and transparent picture of what that business or organisation is really all about. Second, when they encounter a staff member that they regard as not being customer facing, their expectation of how engaging they are going to be is more likely to be different to that of what in their mind is a jolly, all-smiles customer-facing person. So, when they do interact with someone in a support role and that person is incredibly helpful and friendly, that experience is likely to be more genuine, sincere and powerful. ‘Backroom’ TNTs are without doubt the most highly explosive of all, yet despite creating such indelible impressions, they are invariably overlooked, the reality being that the most effort for improving customer experience generally tends to be focused ‘front of house’.

As an example of TNTs being used at their absolute best, I’d like to share with you the experience I had whilst staying away for the first time ever at The Gleneagles Hotel in Scotland. I had just started out on the speaker circuit and had gone there to deliver a presentation.

Having checked in in the morning and spoken in the afternoon, I was walking past the reception in the evening when one of the receptionists smiled at me and said, ‘Good evening, Mr Webster. How are you?’ I am not only pleasantly surprised that they have remembered my name, but also wondering if perhaps I am still wearing my name badge from the conference. A quick glance down confirmed that I wasn’t! Then the receptionist asked, ‘Are you enjoying your first ever stay with us here at Gleneagles?’ Somewhat taken aback by their knowledge of this, I began exuberating about what a wonderful time I was having. They then went on to wish me a lovely meal in the restaurant that I was booked into and concluded by assuring me that if I needed anything, they were there to help.

On top of making me feel like a very welcome guest, this brief encounter also put me at ease in an environment that, having not ever stayed in a place like it before, was out of my comfort zone. It certainly relaxed me and made me feel at home.

On returning to my room that evening, I saw that room service had tidied up. However, not only had they done all the usual stuff that I would have expected in a hotel of this standard – fluffing up the pillows, turning the bed down and leaving a mini selection box of chocolates on my pillow – they had also done something else. I didn't notice it until I was in bed, setting my alarm. They had moved the book I had been reading earlier on before going down to dinner, which I had left open, face down on my bed. They'd then placed it on my bedside table, having inserted a Gleneagles bookmark to mark the page I was on.

The next morning, I am half-awake and wandering down a long corridor in search of breakfast when an elderly looking gentleman who was busy Hoovering turned his vacuum cleaner off, smiled at me and said 'Good morning, Mr Webster. How are you doing? Are you by any chance looking for breakfast?' I smiled and told him I was. He then escorted me to where it was being served, chatting to me along the way, asking me how I was and what I'd been up to so far during my stay. Now this well and truly knocked me off my feet!

Joining me for breakfast amongst a group of other delegates from the conference was the head of training for the hotel. I told him about the conversation I had had with the hotel receptionist and explained to him what an impression it had made on me. I always remember him saying, 'Adrian, we are a world-class five-star hotel; our whole focus is about making anyone staying with us feel incredibly special, to make each and every guest staying with us feel like they are the only guest we have. The person you are talking about is a professional receptionist, not only do they work incredibly hard at doing what they do so well, they also take immense pride in giving our guests the best experience possible'.

Having mentioned the lovely bookmark touch to him, I went on to enthuse about my encounter with the wonderful person I had just met on my way to breakfast, telling him of how impressed I was by him knowing my name. His response was ‘Creating a welcoming atmosphere and delivering an exceptional experience is the collective responsibility of all of us in the Gleneagles team’.

I thought, wow, what a brilliant attitude! And then it struck me; if everyone adopted that same outlook and approach, how much better things could be for not only customers but also for employees everywhere. Having read recently that 89% of customers switch to a competitor following a poor experience, I really do struggle to understand why so many businesses and organisations – large and small, in both the private and public sectors – just don’t seem to understand how much better they could be. They could be such amazing places to work in, and such fantastic places for customers to connect with, whilst at the same time being so much more successful. If only their people adopted that same, simple attitude. After all, as I keep banging on about it – TNTs cost nothing!

Surely, there can be no better fulfilling feeling than knowing you’ve helped brighten up someone’s day and made them feel not only valued and appreciated, but a little bit special too. Seeing someone’s face light up or hearing the delight in someone’s voice down the other end of a phone or receiving a ‘wow’ message in response to a TNT that you’ve done for them – is both heartwarming and uplifting.

But that’s enough of my experiences for the time being; I would now like to hand over to some of the many people who have taken the trouble to share their TNTs – sometimes as the recipient of a heartfelt gesture or an instance of outstanding service, and sometimes as someone who has taken an opportunity to give a TNT and, in doing so, touched or changed someone else’s life. I am humbled by many of these stories, and I thank each and every one of these contributors for sharing their experience.

Old Friend

Some years ago, my wife Marlisa and I were in search of a traditional authentic Spanish tapas bar in London. She's Spanish and loves croquettes. London has many top-end, white linen, white glove restaurants. All of them I am sure are very good at what they do in terms of service excellence and the 'product' they deliver, but we were looking for something a bit different. A friend who lived on Park Lane told us of El Pirata on Down Street, one of those small Mayfair hidey holes that seemed to fit the bill.

On arrival, the restaurant was packed, the staff friendly and the atmosphere and ambience great. We were greeted like old friends, genuinely and warmly, even though we had never been there before, by a man called Roberto, who it turns out was an owner-manager. We were given a table near a service station and close to the open kitchen. Not ideal, but having booked late, and seeing dishes leaving the kitchens and smells entering our nostrils, we were excited. We had an amazing meal; the food and service exceeded our expectations and lived up to our first impressions. Roberto came over to ask if we had enjoyed our meals and to offer us coffees and deserts. Something caught his eye, and a look of horror was barely disguised behind his smile. It turns out that someone, somehow, had spilt oil, food juice or something

similar on my blazer, which was hung over the back of my chair. I hadn't noticed it and certainly wouldn't have apportioned any fault or blame to Roberto or his excellent team. Ironically, they had offered to hang our coats up for us when we arrived, but I declined as I had my phone, wallet and various personal items in the pocket and felt better keeping the jacket with me. Roberto assumed that something must have been spilt on my jacket when a waiter had cleared our table or walked past to another table. He insisted on taking the jacket, taking my address, and having the jacket dry cleaned and delivered to me the next day. He also insisted on taking our wine and desert off the bill. He hadn't needed to mention the spill, let alone offer to help in such a gracious and generous fashion.

This took place 22 years ago. Roberto has since moved on, and his junior now runs the show. For many years, I have recommended El Pirata, taken countless clients there and had company Christmas parties at the place, so the pay back on this one simple act runs into tens of thousands of pounds in revenue. That's client service – at the cost of a bottle of wine and £22.50 for dry cleaning. The restaurant is now 'secretly' very well known and well frequented, and it's always busy. To this day, I can walk in and be remembered and treated like an old friend, even though I have been living in Cape Town for 15 years and probably only visited a handful of times these past few years.

Dino Cooper

We're Open

I am sharing this post from Ricky Webb, the general manager of one of our Marston's rotisserie pubs in Kent – The Star Sidcup Place, because I am so incredibly proud of the team there! If ever there was a shining example of going the extra mile and making a real difference by showing some empathy and compassion to those most in need in the community around us – this is it for me.

Dennis is a 96-year-old veteran who likes to visit us regularly. He also lives with dementia, and this can mean he makes the trip to see us outside of our opening hours. We sometimes find him peering through the window at 8 am thinking it's lunchtime and wondering why he can't get in . . . or coming in for his dinner at 10 pm after our kitchen has closed, believing it to be earlier than it is. We can only imagine the confusion he experiences day to day, so we do our little bit to try and make the confusion a little less. We welcome him at 8 am . . . sit him down and whip him up a quick brekkie and a warm cuppa . . . we seat him at his favourite table at 10 pm and let him know his dinner won't be long . . . little gestures from us that really do make a difference to him.

Sometimes you have to just take a moment from reading the 'good/bad' online reviews and look at the impact you have on the lives of people who won't broadcast it or review online . . . they simply let you know in person how you made a difference.

Dennis is special to us, and it warms our hearts to know he feels the same ♥

According to a member of the team who has been at the pub for seven years, Dennis has been in for a meal every day during her time there.

Jo Bradford



Service with a Smile

The first few years of our son's life have been pretty fraught with a history of meningitis and subsequently a recurring petechiae (non-blanching) rash which appears when he's coming down with any virus. I have been advised that, whenever this rash presents itself, I should take him for blood tests, just to eliminate the worst.

Arriving one day to pick my daughter up from nursery, I noticed as I was lifting my son out of his car seat that the petechiae rash had returned and was starting to spread over his torso. Feeling anxious, I got to the nursery door and rang my friend who is a doctor. His advice was to go to A&E as soon as possible, but not to panic. My husband was 50 minutes away on the tube, and I now had a poorly 18-month-old son with a 3-year-old daughter in tow.

The people at my daughter's nursery were lovely and said that they would look after her for the afternoon, but asked if I would pick her up some lunch from the shop at the end of the road. I obliged, got to the door and realised that I had left my purse on the kitchen table! The teachers kindly gave me £20, but as I was getting out of the car at the busy Tesco Metro, my stress levels began to spiral as I realised that I must have dropped it. My son was crying in my arms and I just didn't know what to do, so I too began to cry.

Noticing my apparent distress, a man wearing a Tesco uniform (who was on a break outside the shop) came over and asked if I was okay. His gentle, kind and calming nature in that moment as I explained my predicament is something which I will always be grateful for. 'Come with me, I am the manager here and will get you all the shopping you need', he said. He then followed me around the shop with a basket whilst I got my daughter her lunch. As I was leaving, he asked me which hospital I was going to. As soon as I told him that it was one in Central London, he looked concerned. He knew from his own experience about the parking issues which I was soon to encounter, so he took a £20 note out of his wallet, put it in my hand and said, 'You will need this'.

After profusely thanking him, I assured him that either myself or my husband would be back the next day to pay for our shopping and pay him back his money. His parting words were said with a smile: 'I know you will'.

Emilie

TNT Thinking Smile with your eyes and listen with your eyes – the eyes have it. Besides being the simplest yet most powerful of TNTs, a nice smile is also the most infectious. Transcending all languages and instantly recognised in all cultures around the world as a positive affirmation of goodwill, a smile has no bounds. However, when people think of a lovely smile, they probably tend to think of someone flashing a beautiful set of perfectly formed, dazzling white teeth. The good news for those of you who are not natural smilers or those of us who have not been particularly blessed in the dental department is that you don't have to smile with your mouth. Instead, you can have the same positive and possibly more sincere effect simply by smiling with your eyes.

If smiling is the most powerful of human expressions, listening is by far the most important of all communication

skills. One of the main problems with listening is that, when someone is talking to us, our ears don't give off any visible signal that we are actually listening; they don't start wagging or bleeping, nor is there a little tell-tale light that comes on. The only real way of indicating to someone that we are listening to them is by maintaining eye contact.

The next time you meet someone's eyes with a smile, you could be giving them a double TNT.

Hot Chocolate Inspiration

Today is day 128 at the Blackburn Royal.

I had been feeling off for a while and had a stomach condition called diverticulitis. I assumed it was that and took over-the-counter medication to try and deal with it.

I hadn't been able to sleep on my side for weeks, and one morning I managed it. I was asleep for maybe an hour when I heard and felt a popping sound. I'd never known pain like it and leapt out of bed.

I could feel fluid gushing in my stomach and knew it was serious. I called an ambulance, and the paramedics took one look at me and bundled me in the ambulance. I remember the ride there, remember arriving at hospital and remember them taking me out of the ambulance, and then I passed out. I was out for the next 32 days.

My intestines had split, so all the bad stuff that runs through them spilt out and was infecting my other organs. I was rushed into surgery where they were basically just trying to keep me alive, but they had to stop after six hours when I had a heart attack. My parents were told it was highly likely I wouldn't make it and to prepare for the worst.

I somehow got through it; but, after 48 hours, the sepsis I had caught was so bad that it was also going to kill me. My parents were told that the doctors had to try more surgery again

but the chances were I wouldn't make it again. But the surgeons worked miracles, and I somehow managed to pull through.

I was on dialysis and a respirator, I had five lots of surgery that first week, but I made it. When I came to, I had lost the use of my legs and right arm. I'm learning to use them again, but none of that matters – I made it despite having next to no chance.

Being here for so long, you genuinely form relationships with people. I count some of them as friends now, including my lead consultant. I just don't have the words to explain the esteem in which I hold her. Put simply, I would not be here without her. I have two sons aged 6 and 11, and because of her I have the chance to still see them grow. I'll never be able to properly repay her.

My aim on Sunday is to walk down to Costa with my two sons and buy them a hot chocolate. I had mentioned this to a couple of nurses in passing.

Today my consultant slipped this on my table when she was doing her rounds.

She is incredible. I have no words.

Kevin Clarke



Good Service x 2

Whilst on holiday in New York, I purchased a unique new shirt but inadvertently left it in the hotel wardrobe when I came home.

I rang the Hilton in Times Square and told the receptionist what had happened; he said he would look into it for me.

Three days later, the shirt was couriered to my home in London with a compliment slip saying ‘with our pleasure’. (No charge.)

I rang the hotel manager to thank them and requested him to personally thank the receptionist for his exceptional service.

A more recent TNT – I thought our integrated fridge was leaking water as the tiles were wet under it and across the kitchen floor. I ordered a new one and paid for it to be installed from Appliances Online.

Upon delivery, the installer said the old fridge was not leaking and traced the leak to another integrated appliance. He said you don’t need a new fridge and called his firm, who agreed to a full refund. He then got a new hose for the other appliance and fixed the leak. I asked him how much I owed him he said ‘nothing’. Obviously, I gave him a good tip.

What fantastic service.

Dave Fletcher

Favourite Room

Jurys Inn Hotel, Derby, 30 Oct 2019

I asked the receptionist at check-in if I could have the same room as last time.

Her reply blew me away: 'Certainly, sir. I've already reserved room 721 for you because I know you liked it so much last time.

I seem to remember you said it was in a really quiet corner of the hotel, so I thought you'd like it again this time'.

Holger Garden

TNT Thinking Ear tugging and pot plants. I was chatting to a lovely old gentleman who before retiring had been a concierge for many years at The Dorchester Hotel in London. He told me that one of his favourite tricks to help guests who were arriving by taxi feel a bit special was to welcome them as they got out of their cab and ask them if they had stayed there before. If they said yes, he would walk into the reception area behind them, carrying whatever luggage they had. Upon putting the luggage down, he would glance across at the receptionist, catch their eye and give one of his ears a couple of quick tugs! This was his signal to let them know that their guests had stayed with them before. The receptionist could then greet them by saying 'Welcome back to the Dorchester'.

I once related this story at a conference I was speaking at. Afterwards another ex-concierge came up to me and said that his way of letting reception know if a guest had stayed there previously was even simpler. 'If they were repeat guests, I used to put their suitcases down on the floor by the pot plant!'

Caring at Invicta Court Care Home

June's big day

During June's one-to-one, June and I discussed her wedding day. June presented me with a beautiful photo album that had a selection of images from her big day. We looked through the album together, with June pointing out to me who was who and what role they played on the day. June singled out one particular photograph and stated that it was her favourite of them all. She innocently mentioned that all of her wedding images were sadly in black and white and expressed it was such a shame as they somehow just didn't appear to truly represent what a wonderful day it was. This comment stuck with me, and I asked her if I could take a picture of her favourite photo from her wedding day and try and get it made into colour for her. With June's permission, we sat down and discussed in great detail what the colours in the picture were.

I managed to outsource an editor who was kindly able to transfer the colours that myself and June had discussed onto the image. Once they returned the image, I got it printed via a special photography lab to ensure a high-quality image and had it framed. Invicta Court's manager (the brilliant Jacqui Pompeus), team members and myself all presented June with her completed gift. June was overwhelmed and said upon first seeing the image,

‘Oooo, that’s lovely! I didn’t think it would be in very much colour’. June was so pleased and has since been thanking me on a regular basis. Soon after receiving it, she had it placed on the wall directly in front of her and has since informed me she smiles at the image daily.

Becky Lyons



Madge's memories

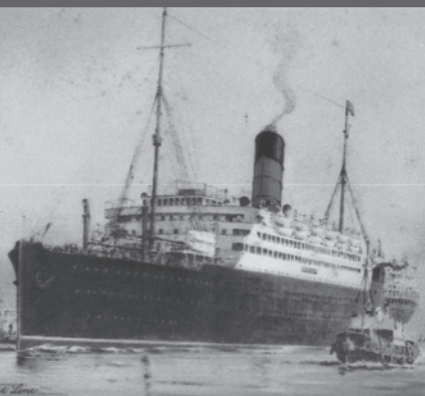
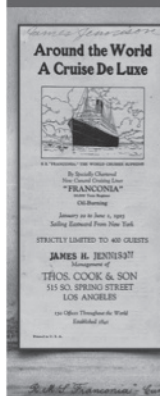
Now 98 years of age, Madge was born in India as an Anglo-Indian, and she had six brothers and was the only girl. She grew up in India and often dips into those memories with fondness. During one of our conversations, she mentioned in passing how, in her late twenties, due to unrest in India, her family sought to send Madge and her elder brother Bernard to England in advance of the rest of her family coming here to seek a safe place to live. In India, they had a big house and servants, and when the family first all arrived here, they lived in one small room. It was a difficult time, especially for her dear mother.

Having told me the name of the ship they travelled on, I looked online to see if I could find any information about it. Having found some, I printed off an image of the ship and, along with a brief summary of her six-week adventure on board it and some brief details of its history, I had a picture made up for Madge.

Madge was very moved and excited to see the ship. So excited that it opened up all sorts of memories for her, and she chatted happily for days about it! She was so thrilled and kept a copy to show her husband and the rest of the family.

Jude Coveney

*Madge & her brother Bernard
Sailed away from India on the Franconia -Cunard Line*



Madge and her brother Bernard were sent to England ahead of the rest of the family from India when she was in her late twenties to settle and find a new home. The journey took about 6 weeks Madge recalls. They couldn't afford the top floor where the 'Posh People' were dancing and smoking. Madge took an instant dislike to them. Madge and her brother Bernard would look out over the Red Sea with excitement and anticipation on their adventure. They would stop at ports and there were always people there throwing things towards them on the ship to sell, but the items were attached to strings so they could be yanked back if needed! Madge hasn't seen a picture of the ship since that voyage all those years ago that started her new life here. Her memories are happy ones despite it being a very difficult time for all the family.

The RMS *Franconia* was an ocean liner operated by the Cunard Line from 1922 to 1956. She was second of three liners named *Franconia* that served the Cunard Line, the others being RMS *Franconia* built in 1910 and the third *Franconia* in 1963. She was launched on 21 October 1922 at the John Brown & Co shipyard in Clydebank, Scotland. Her maiden voyage was between Liverpool and New York in June 1923; she was employed on this route in the summer months until World War II. In the winter, she was used on world cruises.

Wartime service

In September 1939, she was requisitioned as a troopship after refitting at Liverpool. She had a collision off Malta with a French troop ship called the *Marietta Pacha* and was escorted to Malta by the armed merchant cruiser *Alcantara*, but was repaired in time to take part in the Norwegian campaign. On 16 June 1940, while en route to St Nazaire as part of Operation Ariel (the evacuation of the Second British Expeditionary Force from France), she was damaged by near-misses from German bombs and was escorted back to Liverpool for repairs.

Later in the war, she took troops to India and took part in landings at Madagascar, North Africa, Italy and the Azores. In 1945, she was used as a headquarters ship for Winston Churchill and the British delegation at the Yalta Conference. At the end of the war in Europe, *Franconia* made several trips across the Atlantic carrying returning US troops and refugees. After VJ Day, she was employed repatriating British troops, including freed prisoners of war from India. During her government service, she had covered 319784 miles (514642 km) and carried 189239 military personnel.

Legacy

Franconia's pre-war around-the-world cruises and distinguished wartime service made her a popular name within Cunard. Hence, in 1963, RMS *Ivernia* was renamed *Franconia* to continue the name within the company. In recognition of her important Canadian immigration role, Cunard Line gave the builder's model of *Franconia* to the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Growing Customers

A client gave my colleagues a very nice tip on completion of an extremely challenging landscape garden project. They were surprised and delighted by his unexpected generosity but not so much as I was when his wife brought out a gift-wrapped box for me. When I got home and opened it, I was humbled to see a limited-edition bottle of Scotch (my favourite tippie) beneath the wrapping paper!

A few weeks later, we were asked by my client to price another job at his son's house. He was nearly as happy as I was when, after completion, I told him it was on us.

These TNTs can be a perpetual gift. My client has since booked me in for two other projects. It goes to show that TNTs are hugely important.

Gary Bashford

Happy Shoppers

When I worked at Safeway, we used to wipe dry the shopping trolley seats whenever it rained, so that the child sitting in it wouldn't get a wet bottom, and the whole shopping experience would be a far happier one for the parent pushing the trolley!

Gordon MacDonald

Out of the Hat

I needed a dress shirt and bowtie for the office Christmas dinner and, as a busy family man with two kids, I had only one shot at it; Saturday afternoon in Camberley – no pressure!

So, accompanied by my wife, 10-year-old son and 2½-year-old daughter, I braved the high street on a Christmas shopping Saturday with much trepidation and not much idea where to start, not being too familiar with the mens' fashion retailers in town.

After very short visits to two shops, the kids' patience and mine were wearing thin. On the promise of a 'drink and cake after this shop', I dived into Moss Bros, leaving the wife to distract the kids with a wander around a 'plastic tat shop'.

I had barely found a shirt that I liked and was about to try a sample on for size when the family materialised, prompting an urgency to finalise my purchase that I wasn't anticipating.

And this is when the store manager pulled out a TNT.

He found my daughter a top hat from the Wedding Hire section and showed her the mirror. She was so happy wandering around the shop all dressed up, stopping at the mirror for a quick check every now and then.

As for my son, well he was given a jacket to try on and the tie rack to peruse. And after that, he was offered made-to-measure

cloth samples to play 'Match suit materials with liners' – who thought that game could be such fun!

So, with my children fully occupied, the pressure was off, and I was given the time, space and freedom not only to find a shirt and bowtie for the Christmas party, but also a lovely new suit which my wardrobe had been crying out for, for years.

And thanks to the manager and his TNT, I will be going back.
And the family got their drink and cake!

Alan

Salt ‘n’ Pepper

One of our drivers was making a delivery to a construction site in Derby, where he had offloaded the goods and was seeking a signature for the POD.

He walked into the site manager’s cabin, where he was met with a rather unhappy individual who was staring at his microwavable macaroni cheese. ‘Everything ok?’, the driver asked, ‘it’s just, I could . . . umm . . . do with a signature’. ‘NO’ grunted the individual, ‘some thieving bastard has taken my salt and pepper’. Our driver eventually obtained a signature and climbed back into his van.

Then, this particular driver did what he does best – he went the extra mile. With his brain whirring, he darted across the road to a TK Maxx store and purchased, out of his own money, a salt-and-pepper grinder set from the kitchenware section. He then popped back onto the worksite and poked his head around the door of the cabin that he had just left, only to be greeted with a ‘What now?!’

‘Umm, I just went and got these for you’, he said as he presented the site manager with the salt-and-pepper gift.

The manager put his knife and fork down and lifted his head, and an unending smile appeared on his face. This was followed by a stream of thank you’s and words of appreciation.

That manager continues to be a good customer to this day.

Adrian Fowler

Pterodactyl Postal Service

I will never forget the customer service I received from Odeon Cinemas. It was at a time when *Minions* and *Jurassic World* were the main films showing.

As a nice treat, my partner booked the cinema tickets online as it's usually me that would sort it. We remembered why I sort it when we realised he had booked the tickets for in five minutes time instead of in a few days. We were at home in Pjs and would never have made the showing.

We emailed Odeon, explaining the situation, and received a prompt reply from a lovely customer service assistant advising that it was no problem, and that they would send out a credit note that we could use to repurchase the tickets for when we wanted them. The credit note was general so the following wasn't required, but regardless of that, the customer service assistant personalised her response and asked if it was *Minions* or *Jurassic World* we were hoping to see, before confirming the tickets would be sent to us via pterodactyl. We were delighted that they were sorting the issue for us after it was our mistake, and the response made us laugh.

To our delight, when the credit note came through the post, it was accompanied by a little picture of a pterodactyl!

It was such a small and simple personal touch that made a big impact on us, and I'm always telling people about it.

Natasha Greene

Fender Surprise

For some time, I've wanted a Fender Blues Junior amplifier in a Tweed cabinet, and I found one listed on musicstore.de, a German music website.

I ordered it thinking I would need to replace the power lead with a UK three-pin plug. Imagine my delight on unwrapping my delivery to find 'UK Plug Adaptor – no charge' listed on the invoice.

This little act of thoughtfulness has ensured these guys are now my favourite online store for music equipment.

If they are this nice when I didn't ask for something, I can imagine they would try really hard if I ever had a problem with anything I ordered.

Stuart Holah



Saw You Coming

See a customer heading towards the store from a distance?

Start their usual latte, so it's ready when they arrive.

Oh, and throw in the odd free cookie to thank them for their custom.

It's what we always do at Subway Silverburn, Glasgow!

Abid Sadiq

What, No Macaroons!

Gave blood for the 50th time recently, taken by the same nurse as previously. The last time, I had joked about there being no macaroons anymore, and she had said she'd make sure they were reinstated for my 50th – but they weren't. I jokingly said I was mortified.

When I went for my cuppa afterwards, she popped out to Waitrose next door and bought me a giant macaroon out of her own pocket.

I was of course thrilled, so much so that I related it back to the head of the transfusion service – who gave her an award.

Mike Ward

Pumped Up

I got in my car today to find my low-tyre-pressure warning light illuminated. On checking the tyre visually, it was not fully inflated, so I drove to my local tyre replacement store.

As I entered Tyre City in Northwich, I was greeted by the manager, who asked me to drive my car into the repair bay. Two young men immediately removed the tyre, checked it, found a nail, took it out and repaired the puncture.

I thanked them. I went back to reception delighted that I had not had to purchase a new tyre. I asked the manager for my repair bill, and he said, 'Oh don't worry, you are a customer of ours, we have done it free of charge, stay safe'.

That's how you respond to the Covid-19 pandemic – with professionalism and great customer care.

I shall always buy our tyres from this store and recommend them highly.

Thank you.

Roy Newey



Singing Conductor

I have a big smile on my face, right now, in this moment, ignited by the conductor on my 7.01 commute to Waterloo.

A few quotes as he walked up the coach:

‘Sorry to trouble you lovely people at such an early hour, but if I could take a quick glance at your tickets, that would be wonderful’.

Starts singing.

‘Can’t beat a bit of Frank Sinatra . . . show me your tickets or the singing starts up again’.

Big chuckle.

‘Good morning madam, that’s a lovely bright ticket pouch you have on you there, lovely colour, suits you’.

She’s beaming.

The whole coach is smiling. It really only takes that, a bit of joy and human interaction.

Imagine what today would feel like if we all made a conscious decision to turn up the dial on joy and being human, even by just 10%.

Today is going to be amazing.

Sally Earnshaw

Many Happy Returns

I run a venue in Birmingham which is part of a bigger organisation called Flight Club Darts. We are a food and beverage business, but our USP is our darts – pretty awesome even if I say so myself!

One of our best TNTs that we use very successfully is as follows:

When someone makes a booking to come and play darts, as part of the booking process, we ask if it's for a special occasion, as quite frequently it's to celebrate someone's birthday. This being the case, we make a note on the system to remind us when the guest comes in. Then on the day while they are playing, we prepare a nice little chocolate brownie for them, dress it with a special candle, grab a birthday card with a voucher in it, and as one big team we stroll over to the oche together. We then all sing from the top of our voices a very happy birthday to the lucky person.

This little unexpected gesture always gets a warm response. More often than not, you can hear the surprise and joy in the person's voice, along with a little embarrassment I might add, and a lot of laughter!

All in all, a great TNT that always hits the spot.

Frank Burden

TNT Thinking Laughing is good for your health, no joke!

As well as being a magnet for drawing people together, laughter is a medicine that is freely available to all. When you laugh, you increase your own intake of oxygen-rich air, which stimulates your heart and muscles. At the same time, endorphins get released, your mood gets a boost, your anxiety levels tumble and your all-round feel-good factor rockets. Some studies have shown that having a good laugh can bolster your immune system, thereby increasing your chances of being around a bit longer.

Memorable Appointment

I love a good TNT experience. I went to an osteopath last year, and, during my first appointment, he asked me a few non-osteo-related things about my life throughout the session. Without me knowing, he jotted a couple of things down about our discussions at the end of the session.

So then, for my second appointment, he referred back to his notes and asked me things from our previous discussion months prior, such as ‘Did you end up finishing your kitchen project?’ and ‘Did you carry on watching *Love Island*?’ It made the experience much more personal and really memorable.

Remembering things about others makes them feel important in the time they spend with you, especially when they know you are someone who sees many clients in a day. It’s the little things that count.

Lucy Goffin

Bon Voyage

In April 2010, I was fortunate enough to have taken a transatlantic crossing with my sister on Cunard Line's *Queen Mary 2*, sailing from New York. We had a great time and were treated very well; everything was lovely.

We were lucky enough to repeat the experience in January 2012. We entered the ship, where there was an assortment of staff waiting to greet each and every passenger in person. This was only the second time we had ever sailed with them. We were greeted by several people in the same way, a large smile, and told 'Hello, it's nice to have you back'. This was repeated several times throughout the crossing as we met different crew members that we had met previously. Priceless!

We took our 12-year-old niece on the second trip. She had been through a rough year, with her mum having been in and out of hospital, but even at 12 she recognised what good service looked like. We had taken her to New York for New Year, spent five days there and stayed at the Waldorf Astoria. Her best bit, however, was her time on the ship. There are several things that made her trip memorable, all centred around being made to feel special. The crew had no idea what had been going on in her life, but it didn't matter – this is what they do.

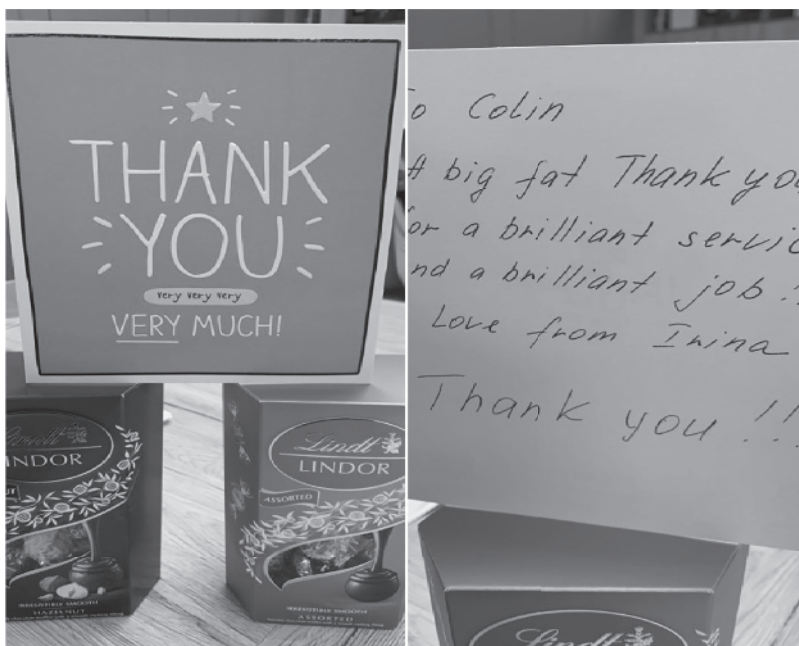
This is a ship that has 2500 passengers at any one time, and it was 20 months between our visits. As for me, I would sail with them in a heartbeat, and hope to do so again next year.

Sarah Burns

Out-of-Way Recognition

In my experience as a Buildbase showroom manager in Barnsley, it's always the little things that go a long way. Despite the heavy snow falling outside, a very happy customer came in to see me with these. I love my job!

Colin Day



Understated

When our kids were eight and six, respectively, we went on a family holiday to Austria, where we stayed at the Aqua Dome Hotel & Therme in Längenfeld. During our stay there, we experienced a stunning mix of low-key, but high-impact service.

For example, each day, the drinks in the room fridge would be replaced. On day 1, the kids drank the two mini bottles of blackcurrant juice. On day 2, the hotel restocked the fridge with four bottles of blackcurrant, which of course got used. By day 3, the other juice flavours had been removed, the top shelf of the fridge was full of blackcurrant juice bottles, and there was a handwritten note from housekeeping saying that we should call if we needed any other flavours returned.

The other memorable service touch was a letter from the hotel manager waiting on our doormat when we got back to the UK, thanking us for staying at the hotel.

Needless to say, we returned to that hotel a few times over the years, and hope to again.

Dr AJM, Kent

Hear to Help

My sisters and I went to visit our grandmother, who had been in hospital for five weeks. We visited her regularly, and it was the highlight of her day to see our faces and listen to what we'd be doing. At the ripe old age of 99, her hearing wasn't what it used to be. She wore hearing aids, one of which had unfortunately been lost in the hospital, but she just about managed to hear with the remaining one.

On this particular visit, we noticed she wasn't hearing well at all, so we took out the hearing aid and saw that a wire had become dislodged.

We asked the hospital staff if there was anything they could do.

They advised us that there was an audiologist across the road in a separate building. It was around 12 noon, so we hurried over, hoping it hadn't closed for lunch.

When we arrived, there was a lady in the reception; we explained the situation and asked if they could help. The lady said in a stern voice and not-so-friendly manner that we needed an appointment and that the audiologist was about to finish in the next few minutes and wouldn't be returning until the following week.

I'm not sure if my sisters and I looked like we were about to start crying, but the lady suddenly said 'Give me a moment'. She went away and returned a few minutes later, saying 'The audiologist will see you now'. Absolutely gobsmacked, we hurried in, thinking we'd need to be quick as we knew he'd officially finished for the day. I don't know what she had said to him, but not only did he take time to talk to us, he went and mended it and gave us some free batteries too. Boom!

As we were leaving, we went to thank her for getting the audiologist to see us.

She took our hands, smiled and said, 'I could see in your eyes the love you have for your gran and how special she is to you all'. With that, she gave us a wink, God-blessed us and wished our gran a speedy recovery.

My sisters and I could not believe our luck that day and will never forget the love and kindness projected. Both the lady and the audiologist truly demonstrated exceptional TNTs. Our gran, Dorothy Littlewood (Granny Bear) sadly passed away on 8th May 2018, falling short of reaching her 100th birthday.

Lisa Gledhill

Why TNTs go BOOM! A boom sound from a TNT occurs when a person goes way beyond someone else's expectations. It is similar in many ways to the noise created from the shockwaves of an object passing through air faster than the speed of sound. TNTs exploding, just like sonic booms, generate enormous amounts of energy, resulting in a relatively much smaller but perfectly audible thunderclap between the ears.

To understand how this happens, I'd like to take a quick look from my perspective at the human mind. There are only three things we need to know when it comes to TNTs and booms. First, our minds are split into two, the conscious and a much bigger subconscious. Second, our minds don't speak any language, they work in pictures. Third, between the conscious and subconscious, there is a filter to block and prevent us overloading our minds with big stuff – we can only take onboard the big things once we have had time to step away, reflect back and digest them. In other words, when we have broken them down into lots of little manageable bits.

Unlike big things, TNTs being so small are able to penetrate straight through this protective filter and gain split-second access to the subconscious, where they detonate on impact, creating a huge, instantaneous, explosive picture. This immediate 'hit' triggers a sudden surge of emotions, top of the list being that of surprise, the number one favourite emotion of your subconscious's oldest resident, a now wide awake and highly excited inner child.

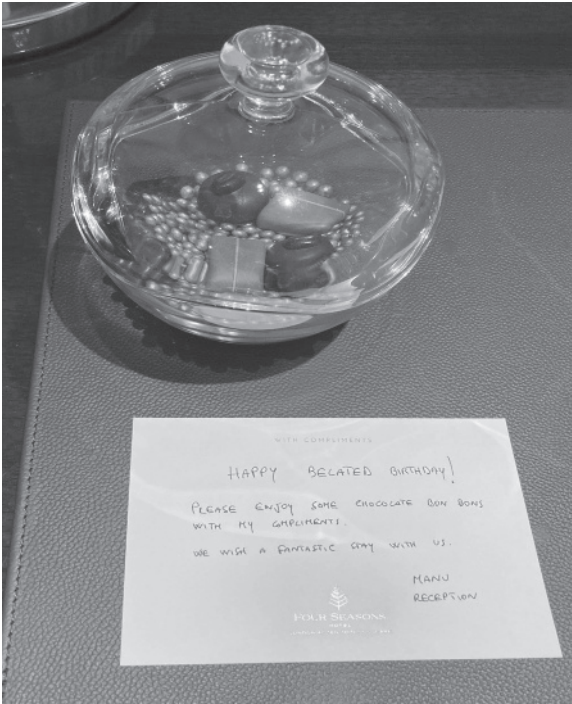
'BOOM!'

Belated Birthday

We arrived in the early afternoon for an eagerly awaited overnight stay at the Four Seasons Hotel at Trinity Square, London. It was a 50th birthday present for me that unfortunately had had to be postponed due to Covid-19 and my husband Larry's shielding.

On arrival, a lovely man at the reception asked me if we were there for a special occasion, and I said that it was a very late birthday present. On arriving back at our room that evening, having enjoyed a fabulous dinner together, we found this lovely personalised card wishing me a happy belated birthday, along with some chocolate bon bons. A small thing, but it made me feel very special.

Maggie Banda



WITH COMPLIMENTS

HAPPY BELATED BIRTHDAY!

PLEASE ENJOY SOME CHOCOLATE BON BONS
WITH MY COMPLIMENTS.

WE WISH A FANTASTIC DAY WITH US.

MANU RECEPTION

FOUR SEASONS
HOTEL
... ..

Food for Thought

I was in Foodland, my local supermarket here in Adelaide, looking for some Pecorino cheese. The lady at the deli counter helped me out and presented me with a chunk of cheese. At the same time, she asked if I would like her to grate it for me – no charge, all part of the service.

I was blown away. The number of fingertips I have lost grating cheese for pasta!! Lesson learnt: This is about delighting the customer with the service you deliver and being proud of what you do.

Justin Porter



TNT Fact Classical music being played in wine stores inspires shoppers to buy more expensive wines.

Feeling Blessed

Wow – what a lovely birthday surprise from Nikos Kokolakis, his family and staff at Kokalás Resort, Georgioupolis, Crete.

Thank you!

Lena Edberg



Beyond Our Remit

I work at Lanyon Bowdler (LB), a leading UK law firm, and I once had a client whose husband, a maintenance engineer, had died following an accident at work. I was instructed by my client in respect of a fatal accident claim for loss of financial and services dependency. Her husband had always managed their computer, and after his passing, she could receive emails but was unable to send, and she was getting upset by this. I asked our IT department to assist. They set her up with a new Gmail account, and she was quickly up and running. This was outside of our mainstream service, but it helped build a really good relationship with the client.

I have subsequently introduced the last item on the agenda for our Personal Injury Department meeting as Notable Achievements and TNTs. It's a great way of giving recognition for going the extra mile.

Another example: we had a client who was really anxious about an examination by a psychiatrist for an expert report. Without the report, we couldn't progress the case for her. She had failed to attend appointments twice despite lots of encouragement. On the third occasion, her lawyer Karen Clarke picked her up, took her to the appointment, all the while reassuring her – and then dropped her off home. The client was delighted.

Our managing partner Brian Evans does a Happy Mondays email every week highlighting this sort of thing.

Neil Lorimer

Bulb Blowing

I was staying at the Jumeirah Emirates Towers hotel in Dubai shortly after it opened, about 17 years ago. I'd been amazed by the attentiveness and service of the staff throughout my short stay there, but one moment blew my mind.

We'd left the room to go out for the day, but I realised I'd forgotten something (I think probably cigarettes!) and went back to get whatever it was.

As I went back to the room, a maintenance guy was up a ladder changing a light bulb, the smartest looking guy I've ever seen up a ladder – wearing a suit. As I went to walk past him, he climbed down, moved the ladder and simply said, 'Please excuse me, Mr Cook'.

I said, 'Oh, don't worry about it, no bother', got my stuff and went out. He waited until I'd passed and wished me a good day as he got back up the ladder.

To this day, I don't know how he knew my name, but I've never forgotten how impressed I was.

Adam Cook

Back Down the Pub

I used to work for an American firm, and my office was in High Holborn looking down Chancery Lane. I worked there for around 10 years, and trained there to qualify as a trade mark attorney. We had a great sociable department, and it was often the case (usually two or three times a week) that some of us would go for a drink on the way home. Our favourite pub was (and still is) The Mitre in Ely Place, a short walk from our offices. There was a great barman there called John – silver haired, and always friendly. I think he had been with the pub for some years. He got to know our group.

Eventually the office closed. I worked for a time at the parent of the UK company in Swindon, commuting back and forth. The group of us who used to gather in the pub are still in touch, and indeed I usually have a few days' holiday with one of them each year on the UK canals.

After moving away from the American firm, I worked for a pharmaceutical company, and then a telecom company, both in London, but remained in touch with the various contacts from my original US company.

Some years after our London office closed, probably 3 years, we all met up again and went to The Mitre. Imagine my surprise when we walked in to see John behind the bar as usual.

He said, ‘Hello Maggie, are you still travelling to Swindon?’ It really made my day!

Maggie Ramage

TNT Thinking Using someone’s first name. Some say that a person’s first name is the most important word to that person, I have no doubt that this is probably correct in the vast majority of cases. What is absolutely certain in all instances is that a person’s name is the strongest connection to their own individual identity, and using it is the best way of getting their attention.

When we remember someone’s name having only just met them, or when we reconnect with a person whom we’ve only ever encountered on rare occasions before, and we use their name – in addition to showing respect and making a good impression, it also makes them feel that they are important to us, that having bothered to remember it, we must genuinely care about them.

Using someone’s first name in a conversation also tends to soften the interaction, making it less formal and more intimate. Often when politicians are on the ropes whilst being grilled by a persistent interviewer, they will resort to calling them by their first name in an attempt to sweeten their interrogator.

Remembering people’s names and using them effectively is something that I’ve noticed over the years a lot of highly successful people go out of their way to do. It’s a powerful TNT that leaves a lasting impression and is one that regularly gets raised during discussions in workshops I’m running.

Problems Owned

On my last flight out of Vienna on a budget airline, we were horribly late. Having spent hours hemmed in together at the boarding area, we finally boarded the plane and sat waiting to take off for what seemed like an eternity, but in reality was probably around 40 mins. It was the end of a long day, and we were all tired. Eventually we took off, landing at Gatwick at something like 1 am. As we taxied along the runway, the captain gave the standard ‘thank you for flying, etc. and ‘sorry we’re late’. We docked, the seat belt lights went out, we started to leave the plane, and when I got to the exit, the captain was standing there, personally apologising to every passenger for the delay, wishing us a safe journey. . . None of it was his fault, but he took responsibility.

A young lady working for a car hire company at Heathrow is presented with a customer who is clearly distressed, upset and fretting. He is German, and needs to get home quickly as he has just been informed that his wife has been taken seriously ill. His plane has just been cancelled until the following day, and his plan is to hire a car so that he can drive through the night to his hometown. However, the hire terms do not allow you to take a hire car out of

the UK, so she could not offer him a car. The man is in pieces. The young lady asks the man to wait a moment, and she disappears into the office. She comes back after a while and says, 'I've looked at the airline schedules, and there is a plane to your city from Gatwick. It leaves at x. I've looked at the coach transfer times, and you will not get there in time to catch the flight. . . but I've spoken with my manager and I can take one of our cars and drive you to Gatwick'. Which they do, and the man catches his plane.

It seems such a simple thing in hindsight, but we read this in the young lady's CV when she applied for a job with us, and it pretty much got her the job! One fairly large act of random kindness!

Andy H

All okay?

I checked into a hotel after a long train journey to London from Leeds. It was late, I was tired and I had lots of client meetings the next day. I get to my room, put my suitcase down, when suddenly I get a call on the room's phone. I pick it up, and it's the front desk that I'd just checked in at, asking if I'm okay, if the room is okay and if there's anything I need. I have never had that before, and that tiny phone call made my whole night.

Charlotte Mather

TNT Thinking The benefits of asking.

I've always regarded question marks as being like little Velcro hooks that enable us to connect with people.

By simply asking a few questions, we are not only showing an interest in someone and opening them up by getting them chatting, we are gaining a better understanding of their particular needs, thereby best placing us to be ready and prepared to go beyond their expectations with TNTs that really do hit the mark and mean a lot to them.

Whenever possible, I think it's always impactful to end a customer interaction with an 'anything else?' question, or a 'happy ending' question as it is sometimes known. It gives them a reassuring feeling that they are in safe hands and that we are there for them, no matter what their needs.

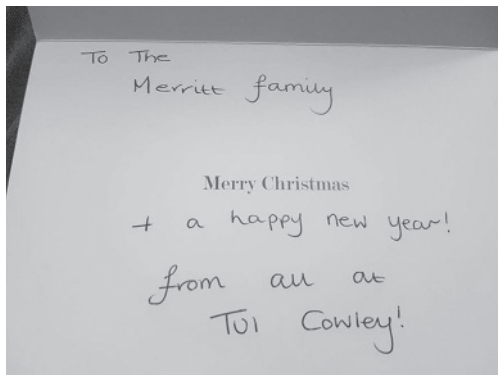


TNT Fact Studies show that a four-year-old child on average asks 437 questions a day. 'I didn't realise it was so few!' is probably what any parent of a four-year-old reading this right now is thinking.

Merritt Christmas

I took my family to New York in April 2019. This week, I got a Christmas card from TUI Cowley Centre. Not unusual, except this has a stamp on it and was handwritten with a message in it. Real care and thought, I felt remembered. They retain my custom.

James Merritt



Scottish Hospitality

My personal TNT memory from Gleneagles: not only did the staff recognise my wife, Susan, and I, but they also warmly welcomed our French Bulldog Poppy by name every time she visited. Poppy loved the place and the attention too!

Another TNT from a bastion of Scottish hospitality is the Loch Lomond Golf Club, where your golf bags are taken to the first tee and picked up from the last green and returned to your car. The locker room team polish your shoes when you're on the golf course and polish your golf shoes when you're in the 19th hole having a beer after your round – you feel very privileged indeed.

And a third TNT from yet another great Scottish institution. Not sure if they still do this but The Three Chimneys Restaurant in Skye used to have a policy where they would open any bottle of wine on the wine list to pour you a single glass – and only charge for a glass!

Keith Mitchell

No Problem

I had a meeting planned in Birmingham with a lady I haven't seen in eons to reconnect and discuss business, and she had booked a restaurant called Opus in the business district. Nice summer menu and all that.

Table booked for 12 noon, so I promptly arrive at 11.55 am – only to see the chefs all walking out of the restaurant and down the road, followed by everyone else. The fire alarm had gone off just at the moment the restaurant was due to open for lunch.

I stood outside like a lemon with my bags and paraphernalia that one needs when on the road for the week, obviously looking a little lost. My colleague arrived, and that is when the most delightful TNT occurred.

The owner of the restaurant came straight over and apologised. Rather than give us a sob story or the hard sell about how we should wait out the fire alarm, she picked up my bag (very heavy) and marched us over the road to her competitor, spoke to the manager and bought us both a glass of champagne to apologise.

Nothing more, nothing less – just good-old-fashioned hospitality.

Of course, we could have stayed where we were for lunch – but guess what? An hour later, and perhaps slightly tiddly, we went back to Opus and had lunch.

Her kind actions made a really memorable day and delivered an emotional connection that I will not forget.

Karen Turton

TNT Thinking Take ownership of problems and spin them into TNT opportunities. When striving to deliver a terrific customer experience, there is no better golden opportunity to blow the socks off customers with some cracking TNTs than when one of them has a problem. It is your chance to shine through your mistakes, demonstrate the level of service you can deliver and, most importantly, show just how much you care. Never simply apologise to a customer and rectify the problem – instead, swing into action and sweep them away with a solution that surpasses anything they would have ever imagined. Problems are pregnant with TNT opportunities. Whenever anyone has a problem, that problem always gives birth to a need – and a need needs a solution!

Whenever I overhear a customer making a complaint and, to my amazement, hear a member of staff start arguing with them, coming up with some pathetic excuse or even trying in some instances to persuade them that there isn't actually a problem, I despair. Arguing with a customer, let alone trying to get them to think that they don't have a problem, is not only insulting a customer's intelligence, it's commercial suicide – it's madness.

You may well win the battle and save some money on the day, but you will not only lose a customer for life, that unhappy ex-customer will go around telling anyone who will listen about what an awful experience they had.

Something I witnessed one particularly warm afternoon a few years ago when I was on stage delivering the after-lunch slot, speaking to an audience of approximately 300 people, has always stood out vividly in my mind. The room was absolutely baking hot, delegates were desperately fanning themselves with their conference brochures and I was melting while presenting on stage under all the lights! It was blindingly obvious

to everyone that the air conditioning had packed up. When I'd finished speaking, the organisers called for a member of the hotel management team to come and fix the problem during the coffee break.

When a manager eventually turned up, instead of apologising and setting about taking steps to resolve the issue, they immediately adopted a confrontational stance and went on the defence by stating, in a somewhat aggressive tone, that they had already checked if the air con was working and that, in their opinion, the room wasn't too hot at all – 'not for this particular room'. My ears couldn't believe what they were hearing! Then, having refused to even acknowledge there was a problem, let alone accept any responsibility or even be seen to make any attempt to do anything about it, they strutted off in a huff. The managing director of the company who's conference it was turned to me with a look of astonishment on their face and said, 'We've used this venue for the past three years. Never again!'

A pinch of sugar goes a lot further than a fist full of salt.

– Annie Webster

On the other side of the coin, I was talking about this particular experience to a lady I'd met at a conference, and in response she started telling me about a charismatic entrepreneurial hotel owner she once worked for who used to deliberately create the odd little problem here and there for guests, so that he could be seen to go out of his way to fix them!

Special Requirements

When I booked into the Ibis hotel, George Square, Glasgow, I'd forgotten that under the 'additional requests', I'd asked for vegan snacks. Got to my room and discovered these little reminders!

Harry Webster



Two-Way Street

We both do a lot of travelling. When we do receive really great service, we always make a note of the names of those responsible. Then, after returning home to Canada, we contact the most senior people that we possibly can within their company. We describe the experience we had, let them know just what a positive difference those individuals made, and explain why, through their TNT actions, they have motivated us to return. A lot of people are quick to complain, but few take the time to say ‘thank you’!

Natalie and Francois Boyko

TNT Thinking If people have given you a great experience, tell them! Recent surveys show that consumers are 21% more likely to leave a review after a negative experience than a positive one. It takes just a few minutes to go online and let someone know what a great job they’re doing and to let them know just how good they’ve made you feel. It not only makes them feel over the moon, it inspires them to go and do it for others. If they’ve made your day, go make theirs!

Ice Cream Craving

It sounds stupid but . . . at the time I was a stressed-out student doing a food shop at about 9 pm on a Friday night. In my stressed mid-exams state, I desperately wanted chocolate ice cream. Nothing fancy, just the regular own-brand cheap stuff. I went and asked a staff member who was unpacking in the frozen section if he knew where it was. He looked at me strangely, checked his cage and then vanished.

I was fairly confused until he reappeared two minutes later with a tub of ice cream for me! He had gone out and found it in the stock room and brought it out for me. I could have cried, because he had just done something so sweet for me when he didn't really have to. He could easily have said 'Sorry, it's not out on the shop floor right now' – but he went out of his way to help me and, even though it was so small, it meant so much at the time.

Just for clarification, I was completely sober at the time. Most people would need a couple of drinks to get emotional over ice cream, but not me!

Vici Hemming

Happy Ever After

When we were coming back from honeymoon in Mexico, we had issues checking in online for our flight home, which meant we had to do it at the airport. This meant that my wife and I couldn't sit next to each other but in separate rows on the flight home. Needless to say, a bit of a blow and sore point after a great two weeks away.

Anyway, when we boarded the plane, one stewardess did everything she could to find us seats together – but to no avail, as the flight was fully booked and not a single spare seat was available. A really nice touch that she even tried.

The 9–10-hour flight passes and, just after we land in the UK, the same stewardess comes to me and apologises for the flight home, knows it isn't a great way to end a honeymoon, gives us a bottle of wine and passes on her congratulations to us both! Boom!

A situation that she could have easily walked away from and not returned to – but went out of her way to make a memorable impression – which needless to say she achieved.

Matt Holdstock

. . . And Relax!

For my 19th birthday, my boyfriend bought me a voucher for the two of us to visit The Shard in London. As we walked towards the entrance to this imposing building, I suddenly felt nervous and underdressed. What if my sundress and trainers, or my boyfriend's shorts, were too casual? What if our online voucher wasn't valid?

The man at the reception desk looked up. 'Hi guys', he said. 'Are you here to visit the observation platform?' I hesitated and fumbled with the creased voucher.

The receptionist cracked a huge smile. 'I see you have a voucher, which is great. I need to take that off you, and point out where the lift is. I'd also like to welcome you to The Shard – you can relax, now that you're here. Just so you know what to expect, there are two restaurant bars on the observation levels, and the upper one is usually quieter if the lower one is busy or you just want some space. Take as long as you want, enjoy the views and, most important of all, have a great time'.

And, just like that, I realised all my nervousness had disappeared. Was the receptionist a mind reader, or was this his welcome for everyone? What I do know is that he made the difference and ensured we had a relaxed experience that we will remember forever.

Izzy, Exeter

TNT Thinking Experts estimate that we have up to 80,000 thoughts a day, 80% of which are negative and 95% are repetitive. What this tells me is that there must be an awful lot of people out there feeling far more anxious on the inside than what they appear to be on the outside. I know that whenever I'm feeling concerned about something, it always seems like everyone else is happily sailing along without a care in the world – how wrong I must be! Appearances can be extremely deceptive, and I think it is important to recognise that, despite giving the impression that they are positively brimming over with confidence, what's going on inside someone's head may well be a very different story.

Knowing this, any TNT actions we take to help drive the stress out of a situation and put someone's mind at ease, no matter how small those actions may be, are likely to have a much bigger effect than we may well think or ever know. As Robin Williams once said, 'Everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about. Be kind. Always'.

I think it is especially important to remember this when looking after new customers or new starters in a team. You may have grown used to the environment you are working in and become familiar with who's who and what's what. To an outsider or a newcomer, however, things can be quite daunting and all a bit overwhelming at first, when everything is completely new to them, and well outside their comfort zone. The tiniest of TNT gestures – a smile, a nod of the head and a few warm words – is all it usually takes to make them feel at home and how they are feeling on the inside to start matching their appearance on the outside.

Whilst I'm on the subject of taking away people's anxiety, one of the most common negative TNTs that I hear mentioned time and time again is when someone rings someone with a problem and that person, having promised to ring them

back with an answer, doesn't. Not knowing what's going on, if anything is actually being done about it, is something that really does begin to wind up those who are normally the calmest and most placid of people. As I used to repeatedly say to all my team, 'Always ring people back, even if it's just to tell them that you've got nothing to tell them!'