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PUTTIN' ON THE RITZ

THE SECRET TO THE RITZ-CARLTON'S AMAZING CUSTOMER SERVICE

If there is one thing Ritz-Carlton hotels know best, it's customer service. One family visiting the Ritz-Carlton in Bali was amazed by the treatment they received when the special food they'd packed for their son, who had a severe food allergy, was damaged in transport. Since the food he needed was unavailable in Bali, a member of the staff had their mother buy the goods in Singapore and fly them to Bali for the boy. This extreme example of going above and beyond in the interest of a client is not foreign to the hotel chain, whose attention to detail has earned it a place among the most successful hotels on the planet. How do they do it? They focus on people first, starting with their staff.

The Ritz-Carlton sets the bar for anticipating the needs of their clients. Each employee is taught how to see exactly what their guests might need — before they need it. This means hiring people who are empathetic and who have exceptional personal skills. The company

also takes special care to make sure the right people are in the right positions. Rather than giving a brand-new employee a ton of information to process and then setting them loose on the floor, the company approaches their training from a more emotional perspective. By making the experience positive and uplifting, the Ritz-Carlton ensures each employee is invested in the company and its mission. The key, they have found, is to make each employee a true-blue ambassador for the Ritz, starting from day one.

Once the Ritz has secured the right employee and has given them a world-class orientation, the team member has extensive on-the-job training where they learn situational strategies for serving guests. A trained new team member is then incentivized to give incredible customer service, as they receive regular tokens of appreciation from peers and management throughout their career. They also enjoy being part of a company culture



that celebrates each individual and recognizes them for their hard work and dedication to service.

It may not be possible for you to phone a friend from another nation to bring you help when you're in a customer service bind, like the Ritz-Carlton in Bali did, but keep in mind that hiring a team of talented people who are willing to go above and beyond for the brand is truly the best strategy for providing world-class customer service.

DECISIONS MADE

Why I Love Working With Professional Property Managers

When I started working with indoor air quality — IAQ — in 1988, the field was surprisingly broad. IAQ was a relatively new topic, and I was willing to take any job that came up. However, by 1990, it became obvious I had a choice to make. I needed to decide whether I wanted to focus on working with residential buildings and homeowners or if I would dedicate my time to professional building managers and commercial properties.

A couple of experiences shaped my future aspirations, but two specific phone calls come to mind. The first call was from a woman who described feeling bad while at her house, and only better when she went outside — a strong indicator of an IAQ problem. The second call was from a woman who told me about her dog, who suddenly became sick after she and her husband moved into their new home.

I spent at least 45 minutes on the phone with each of these women, trying to help them navigate their situations. Finally, I told them I could come out and take a look. I let them know my minimum fee for homes of their size would be between \$500 and \$600. Immediately, I got the exact same response during both calls: "Oh, we can't afford that. Thank you anyway!" followed by the homeowner hanging up quickly. This was always a fairly devastating response after dedicating almost an hour of my time trying to help over the phone.

I had the exact opposite response on phone calls I had with property managers or other real estate professionals — individuals working with multi-million-dollar properties who knew the risks they would face should someone get sick in their building.



A property manager would call and tell me the problem, we would discuss the situation, and then they'd ask me how soon I could be out there. When I told them it would cost X amount for the area size, I would get a very different response than I would with a homeowner: "Just get out here. We can't have you soon enough!"

There are many different niches I could have followed in IAQ beyond homes or commercial buildings. I looked into inspecting hospitals and medical facilities, hotels, industrial facilities, and even custom homes. There were things I liked and disliked about each field, but nothing compares to the satisfaction I get from working with commercial property owners.

Within three years of starting my business, I knew I wanted to work exclusively with property managers who were committed to getting the work done right. Ultimately, I am pleased with the choice I made. This time of year, I often look back on the previous years, reflecting on the decisions I made that brought

me to where I am today.

When I look back on my commitment to working with commercial managers and building owners, I don't feel anything but satisfaction. I have worked with so many great professionals over the course of my career, and the vast majority have been informed, friendly, and helpful. Many of them have even become personal friends, and I'm happy to have them in my life.

This year, as families across the country reach out to celebrate the holidays, I hope everyone who reads this will consider me a friend as well. Have a happy and healthy Christmas holiday and a productive and profitable New Year!

Train West

How to NETWORK LIKE A PRO

Do you want to get the most out of your networking efforts? With a few time-management principles in mind, you can improve your efficiency and effectiveness at the networking game.

Your first step is to make sure that you're actually connecting with people at events. Talking about the weather may break the ice, but you won't get anywhere if you don't treat each potential connection as a relationship to build. Devoting more time to each person individually is better than spreading yourself so thin that you don't establish a real rapport with anyone.

When you enter into conversations with new faces, the impulse may be to talk all about yourself and ask them what they can do to help you. But unless they're practically begging you for your business card, it's a waste to make it all about you. Start by offering them something, whether that's a referral, a resource, or even tickets to the sold-out basketball game next weekend. Doing for others is a much more effective way to get a relationship started.

When it comes to the bigger picture, you can maximize your time by being choosy about the events you attend. It can be great to meet all kinds of new people, but being strategic about who you're trying to meet and what goals you want to achieve will make the process much smarter.

For example, if you need to get in front of New York editors for a potential book, you should proactively find conferences, speaking engagements, or events where they are in attendance. That doesn't mean the other events are worthless, but it allows you to prioritize. If you know what you want to accomplish, you don't have to spin your wheels going to places that will never put you near the right people.

That last element — goal setting — is probably the most crucial to managing your networking time optimally. When you go to an event, set a measurable goal to achieve before you walk out the door at the end, like "collecting five new business cards." Otherwise, it's far too easy to hang back and passively wait for something to happen — which isn't the best use of your time. By connecting with people, setting goals, and being strategic, you won't have to wait long to start seeing better results from your networking efforts!

Charlie Wiles:

Executive Director of the American Council for Accredited Certification



When I founded the American Council for Accredited Certification (ACAC) — initially called the American Indoor Air Quality Council — in 1992, indoor air quality was still a relatively new topic to the general public. My goal was to offer a program that would provide qualified candidates operating within the field of IAQ the opportunity to receive independent accreditation.

Since then, the ACAC has become the oldest and most prestigious certifying body dedicated to IAQ. Our numbers are filled with many of the most talented individuals in the field of IAQ, including Travis West of Building Air Quality.

I met Travis in the early 2000s. Travis held certification through the Indoor Air Quality Association and was looking to expand upon his accreditation. Right from the start, Travis proved himself to be very knowledgeable about the industry, especially in regard to commercial and institutional buildings. He is the sort of person who easily stands out as an expert in their field.

Back then, Travis was one of the few people who focused on commercial buildings as opposed to residential establishments. At the time, we still had chapters in our organization, and soon after meeting him, we reached out and asked Travis if he would be willing to start a chapter of our council in his area. His outstanding leadership abilities and experience made him a clear choice to start the new chapter, and he did not disappoint.

In 2005, I reached out to Travis again, this time inviting him to serve on our national advisory board. We hold executive meetings once a year, where over 100 board members get together and discuss the industry. For the past 11 years, Travis has attended council meetings consistently, providing his own insight into industry issues.

Over the course of 24 years, I have encountered a great number of talented individuals in the field of IAQ. Travis West has made a good name for himself and justly so. Along with being very knowledgeable about his field and dedicated to his work, I would also call him honest, dependable, and trustworthy. Basically, Travis is a good guy, and I am glad to know him.

Yule Log Woes WOOD FIREPLACES AND INDOOR AIR QUALITY

'Tis the season for chestnuts roasting by the open fire, yule logs burning bright, and fireplaces of all sorts. When used properly, a wood-burning fireplace can reduce the cost of your heating bill and create a nice ambience during the holidays. However, burning wood can have a negative impact on indoor air quality.

It's important to remember that smoke creates particle pollution, worsening asthma and exacerbating allergic conditions. Wood smoke is made up of a mixture of gases, including carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, and nitrogen dioxide, in addition to other particles coming from the burning organic matter.

Without proper ventilation, wood smoke can irritate eyes and sinuses, cause a tightness in the chest, and lead to coughing and trouble breathing. Those with asthma or allergies are not the only ones at risk. Children, seniors, and individuals with pre-existing heart conditions are also more likely to suffer from the negative effects associated with wood smoke. Extended exposure to wood smoke leads to an increased risk for developing asthma.

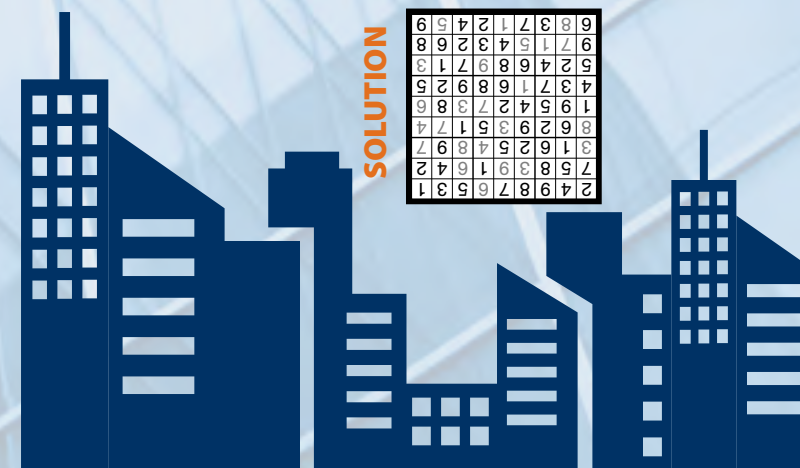
This isn't to say you should shun wood-burning stoves and fireplaces entirely. When going to warm your holiday hearth, just keep these safety rules in mind:

- Wood-burning stoves or fireplaces should be EPA certified and professionally installed, as to emit less pollution.
- Schedule regular maintenance on your wood stove or fireplace. Have chimneys and vents inspected at least once a year.
- Use wood alternatives — such as EcoBricks — to reduce emissions.
- If burning real wood, select seasoned hardwoods — elm, maple, oak — which deposit less creosote in chimneys than soft woods like cedar, pine, or fir.



- NEVER burn scrap wood or wood that has been stained, painted, or treated in any way. Burning these could release toxic pollutants, like lead or arsenic, into the air.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors.

Whether your wood-burning stove or fireplace is a holiday tradition or a necessity for getting through cool winter months, it can be a great benefit if used carefully. Remember these rules and have a warm — and safe — winter!



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