



### Lynn Burgess, MBA, RYT

Lynn Burgess is the owner/director of Yoga from the Heart, Sarasota's premier yoga studio. She was awarded the prestigious 2002 Woman Entrepreneurial Excellence Award by the Sarasota Chamber of Commerce. She has also been voted as having the number one yoga class in Sarasota by *Sarasota Magazine* (June 2006). Lynn holds an MBA from University of South Florida and has years of corporate experience as a sales and marketing director. She has been teaching yoga since 1997.



## BALANCING YOUR BUSINESS

# Becoming Extraordinary!

By Lynn Burgess, MBA, RYT

## Clients Reveal: The Top 5 Reasons Prospects Shop (or Don't Shop) Your Studio

**W**hat does any extraordinary business do to dazzle customers and defy comparison? Extraordinary businesses do what no one else does: they get to know the customer better than anyone else in the business and connect with that customer more deeply than anyone else.

There are many ways to create unsurpassed customer service, whether you are a large studio operator or a one-person band. Some of them might surprise you. You won't find rocket science here. These methods sound simple but can often be challenging to execute and sustain. Perhaps the most surprising of all is that some of the greatest successes are carried out by quite ordinary people and businesses who simply do what others are not willing to do achieve extraordinary success.

**Tip Number 1:** Make a great first impression. Customers form an immediate opinion about your business and whether or not they are comfortable enough to buy from you within the first eight seconds of their encounter. Since you never get a second chance to make a first impression, the focus becomes not so much how to sell to your clients, but how to make them feel at ease enough to buy more. Some ways of helping



your customers to feel at home in your studio are to greet them as they come in and pay attention to them, giving them a sense that they are both wanted and welcomed in your space. This might sound pretty obvious, but consider the amount of times you have walked into a shop and been ignored, or even worse, felt as though you were intruding on someone's personal conversation.

**Tip Number 2:** Keep your environment (interior and exterior) looking clean, kept and inviting. Many customers will have formed an opinion about you and your business as soon as they pull into your parking lot. Many customers will even decide whether or not to get out of their cars, depending upon the appearance of a studio. Make sure your exterior is well kept; if there are flower beds, keep them tended, if there are trash bins, keep them contained and unobtrusive. And that is just the outside. Once the client has entered your domain, the sense of who you are based on the surroundings you have created continues. Make sure there are places to sit comfortably in the lobby, even conveniences such as

shoe racks, coat hooks, all those little things that in the long run will make the customer's life easier. Cleanliness is key here as a good yoga studio is not only projecting a clean and healthful appearance but needs to maintain one as well. Floors can get overlooked, but sweeping at least twice a day is very important. After all, once you get your student through the door, you will get them down on the mat, and Upavista Konasana is a lovely pose for inspecting the condition of the studio floor. Maintaining neatness and cleanliness helps to ensure that the client knows you are open for business and are eager to serve them. If the customer thinks that no one is in the studio, or worse, that no one cares about the studio, they will not feel very inclined to come in and see what you are all about.

**Tip Number 3:** Keep your own appearance polished and professional. Especially in the "fitness" business, customers tend to associate the overall look of the teacher/owner with the look they are hoping to achieve by coming to you. If you look slovenly or haggard, the thought process of

the client is likely to be “Well, if yoga doesn’t work for the teacher, what am I going to gain from coming here?” Not only is there the “expectation by association”, the desire to do business with someone successful and happy, but it also goes back to making the client feel welcomed. If the owner or teacher can’t be bothered enough to take care of themselves, how is the client to believe that they can be bothered to take care of them?

**Tip Number 4:** Ask your customers what they think would make your business better for them. At Yoga from the Heart we routinely send out email surveys requesting that our students share with us any suggestions they may have to improve their experience at the studio. This simple validation of the students’ wants and needs makes them feel important and can provide some

insights into how well you are really doing. A new studio owner can start up a Customer Advisory Board (CAB) that can meet regularly (ours meets quarterly) as another way of gaining some valuable ideas as to what your clients really want.

**Tip Number 5:** The word *free* has the greatest impact on the customer. Most people find it very hard to pass up any ad with the word free in it. Even if they are wary, more often than not they will still look to find out what is free and how they can benefit from it. Many owners get very anxious at the thought of giving anything away, but free sample classes are a wonderful way to draw in customers who would have otherwise never considered coming to the studio. If the class is free, the logic goes, what have I got to lose? So by offering something for nothing, the

business actually stands to gain a lot more than they have sacrificed. A new regular student is certainly worth more than the one class it took to get him or her there.

Sometimes the obvious solutions are the ones which make the greatest impact. By paying attention to the clients’ wants and needs and honoring them with the consideration they deserve, a studio owner opens themselves up to a wide range of insights and revelations about what goes in their customers’ minds and what makes them tick regarding their loyalty to you and their desire to spend money on your services. 📧

Lynn Burgess  
yogafromtheheart.com  
941.929.9878