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Top Ten Professional Excellence Gems for Enhancing WORD-OF-MOUTH

By Verena Aibel, Vibrant Visions International

At a recent Rotary International meeting, I facilitated a marketing clinic where we brainstormed how to best market our products and services. Aside from the usual discussion regarding mailings, advertising and business cards, we quickly found ourselves talking about one thing: the importance of word-of-mouth.

The group agreed that word-of-mouth was the most critical marketing method that brings priceless third-party endorsements and subsequent business. Following are professional excellence gems that could enhance the word-of-mouth about you and your business!

Be yourself and act with integrity. Be likeable, be personable, be approachable and cultivate a high level of integrity.

Be accountable and respectful. Show true concern for your customer's welfare and satisfaction. Do what you say you're going to do when you say you'll do it. Ask for your customer's input, feedback, and suggestions for improvement or business growth.

Be reasonable and consistent. Don't think you'll do a one-time mailing and make an impact on your intended audience. Develop a plan and execute it on a regular, consistent basis.

Be aware and a team player. Become an active participant in various industry-specific networks to acquire knowledge to pass on to your clients and to help grow your business.

Be generous and visible. Establish and build your local presence by giving a portion of your time and resources to your community. Consider participation in service organizations such as Rotary International or by offering workshops, complimentary services or raffle items. Any press you receive will lend greater credibility than any advertising you might place.

Be grateful and show it. Show gratitude to your customers, staff and vendors. Host appreciation days, send cards, provide gift certificates, send flowers, or periodically interview special people and do a write-up for your company newsletter or for the local news.

Be trustworthy. Be someone who engenders trust and who offers a sense of security and comfort. Customers (and the law) require that you keep their information con-

fidential. In the words of Thomas J. Leonard, founder of CoachU and CoachVille: "Underpromise and over-deliver!"

Be clear about your niche or specialty. Know your strengths and let people know what they are. Don't mislead people or waste your time by trying to be all things to all people. That creates confusion and mediocrity.

Be communications and customer oriented. Have clearly written policies. Stand behind your products or services at all costs.

Be innovative and have fun! Review your current marketing practices and add a new element to spice up your approach from time to time. ❖

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