

# Small Business Success

September 2015



Community  
Futures Newsask



## Manager's Report

Newsask Community Futures Development Corporation celebrated their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary on September 2<sup>nd</sup> at Tisdale Town Square with a regional barbecue in support of Northeast Outreach and Support Services.

The corporation's Board of Directors chose to provide the proceeds from the barbecue toward the Women's Shelter in Melfort. It's an excellent way to support further funding requirements for this group.

Newsask Community Futures has been involved in Community Economic Development projects such as Challenge 4 Communities, Youth Business Excellence Awards and the North East Supported Employment Program for people with disabilities to name a few.

Newsask Community Futures Development Corporation is considered to be a developmental lender and offers Loans, Advice, Support providing over 700 loans in the amount of over 11.5 million and leveraging over 35.5 million dollars since inception. Levering is defined as funding obtained as a result of providing assistance with researching/preparing business plans or down payments to trigger funding from other financial institutions.

A WD (Western Economic Diversification Canada who is a partial funder of the Community Futures program) initiated performance report indicated clients that went through the Community Futures program stay in business longer and rebounded from the recessionary impacts following the financial crisis of 2008. The report identified that the performance of CF assisted clients is compared to a group of similar firms that did not receive assistance from the CF. Indicators including industry concentration, employment dynamics, firm longevity, and sales performance which were calculated and compared for both groups of firms. The data demonstrates Community Futures organizations lending and support activity is making a difference.

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# The Exclusive Happy Workplace

Published in cooperation with [Blue Beetle Books](#)

In the search for the happy workplace, many techniques have been tried and all seem to work to some degree. Of the ideas that are the most effective, the one thing they have in common is a demonstrated respect for employees. However, personal happiness of staff must be pursued with honesty not just as a PR exercise.

You know those company videos or blog posts aimed at showing the world just how great Company X is to work for? Everyone is having fun at work, and they're smiling while talking about all the perks. We have come to think of this as what an engaged workforce might look like. However this Pleasantville snapshot can be a little misleading.

In this article we look at the potential advantages of profiling the personal stories of our staff. One industry that does this well is the travel industry. It's quite common to see a photograph of a travel counsellor in the store window with a brief sketch of his or her background. Likewise, realtors will often give a personal overview in a newspaper ad. Today, social media gives us a new opportunity to profile our experienced staff using Tweets and Facebook pages to talk briefly about past accomplishments.

All of these approaches make it clear that our company is not a faceless franchise but a collection of experienced and caring individuals. Even internally, within the office, much can be done to promote greater understanding between staff to the ultimate benefit of all employees, and the company itself, creating a significantly happier workplace.

## Personal Histories

In the past few years we have seen an explosion of interest by individuals regarding their heritage and family history. Ancestry.ca is a major player in meeting that need. We of course would never demand to know about our staff's family history, since that would be an invasion of privacy. However, some employers in search of a happy workplace have found it productive and interesting to have individual employees talk about their own personal journeys in terms of career or education. A case in point; I once had a lady work for my company as a receptionist. No questions were asked about her education at the time of hiring since she was obviously very bright. She was from India and it later turned out that she had an education in early Indian history - earning her a graduate level degree. When she told several staff members about her fascinating history it triggered the idea of a monthly social mixer where any staff member could talk about their adventures in early employment and education including perhaps travel adventures. Obviously there was no pressure and anyone who didn't want to share their experience was free to decline the offer.



## Several benefits emerged

1. Firstly it demonstrated that, as their boss, I saw them as individuals, each with a unique history.
2. We all gained a better understanding of our workmates as individuals.
3. We identified skills that could be transferred to the workplace.
4. It gave people a chance to demonstrate pride in their past accomplishments and led to new relationships between employees sharing common interests or experience, such as industries worked in and countries travelled to.

## What is Superb Customer Service?

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I recently came home from an extended hospital stay, complete with a three-month un-groomed beard and badly needing a haircut. I called a local hairdresser where I have been a customer for about a year and made an appointment. On the day of my appointment, to my surprise, a young lady employed by the hairdresser showed up at my front door although I was about to leave for her place of business. Given the challenge of my neglected hair and beard, it turned into two-hour job. As I prepared to pay for the exceptional service she informed me that there was no charge. She explained that their policy with established customers who have just come home from hospital, is to go to their home and not charge. I call that Positively Outrageous Service or POS. In the following weeks I told everyone in my coffee crowd, naming the hairdresser and when asked to execute a keynote for a conference, I told my audience the story, naming names.

In the late 1990's author and lecturer, T. Scott Gross developed the concept of POS and wrote a bestselling book with the central message that superb customer service is service that consistently goes above and beyond customer expectations. Organizations acquire loyal customers because their customer service is consistently excellent, which encourages customers to continue coming back for the same great experience. If an organization can give every customer the same superior service, their reputation among their customer base will be strengthened. Retail consultants agree that the trick is to practice POS in a way that is highly visible to at least one customer and watch that customer tell a hundred others. In today's tough economy, cutting prices and providing good service aren't enough. To be truly successful, innovative businesspeople must learn the art of Positively Outrageous Service (POS)-doing the unexpected, unexpectedly, and giving the customer more than he or she could hope for.



POS Has to Be:

1. Unexpected - if a customer expects it, how can it be outrageous?
2. Above and beyond - we're talking out of proportion to the circumstances.
3. Compelling - what you do has to be worth talking about. You want customers to want to tell others what you did for them.

Positively outrageous service also comes into play when you make a mistake. POS says that the best thing that can happen to your reputation is to make a mistake, since it gives you a chance to impress the heck out of the customer. Here's how to do just that:

1. Fully admit the mistake
2. Move to correct the mistake immediately
3. Do something outrageous and unexpected such as offering a steep discount on their next purchase.

Some years ago I was surprised to receive an invitation to a sales meeting by my cellular carrier after I had complained about bad service. The sales manager invited me to speak to the entire sales team at their Monday morning meeting. I was able to explain my frustration and tell them how I thought they should have handled it. I was most impressed. And of course told everyone in my network.

The fashion giant Nordstrom's has always practiced POS. I have always enjoyed the story of a Nordstrom's customer who bought a shirt but needed the arm-length shortened and therefore could not take his purchase home immediately. Much to his surprise a Nordstrom's employee from the menswear

department, showed up at his door at six o'clock that evening explaining that his way home took him through the customer's neighbourhood and he thought he would save the customer the trip back to the store.

Can you honestly say that you offer superb customer service that consistently goes above and beyond customer expectations? Organizations acquire and retain loyal customers because their customer service is consistently excellent, encouraging people to keep coming back for the same great experience. While it's not always possible to give every customer the same extreme customer service, using POS principles will build your reputation and get people talking about your company in a positive light.

## Challenge 4 Communities 2015

**4 Weeks 4 Challenges 4 Winners 4 Prizes**

Community Futures Newsask is hosting our sixth annual "Challenge 4 Communities"

All community groups (service groups, neighbor groups, youth groups, etc.) are invited to submit community projects that compete for prize money. The public will decide the winners with weekly voting on the internet over a four week format beginning October 30, 2015. Rules and an application form are available on our website at [cfsask.ca/newsask](http://cfsask.ca/newsask) (click on Challenge 4 Communities)

Get involved with your community today, submit a project, and compete for prize money!



**Challenge 4  
Communities  
2015**

## Embracing Diversity Workshop

*We need to shift how we work and do business with each other!*

**Wednesday, October 21, 2015**

**10:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.**

**Nipawin Evergreen Centre -300 Evergreen DR. Nipawin, SK**

Funded in part by Newsask Community Futures Development Corporation and the Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program and in partnership with the North East Supported Employment Program, the NE Newcomers Services, Tisdale & District Chamber of Commerce, Nipawin & District Chamber of Commerce, and Melfort Chamber of Commerce will be holding a luncheon with keynote speakers, Marli Brown & John Lagimodiere.

RSVP by October 09, 2015

**Contact:** Newsask Community Futures

Tel: (306) 873-4449

\$10 per person

If you are on assistance, fees will be waived.



## Cartoon

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