

## SELLING POINTS

### Are you stressing your female customers?

Women are more stressed than ever. In the course of doing business with your female customers and clients, are you reducing some of that stress — or inadvertently adding more?

Answer these questions:

#### Your Products

- Does your product save time?
- Is it easy to use and understand?
- Does it replace something cumbersome or slow that she is already doing now?
- Is it compatible with other products she may already have?

#### Access

- Is it easy to find?
- Is it simple to buy?
- Does it work without the need to buy extra parts?
- Does it come with a service plan?
- Is it easy to assemble or come with simple instructions?

#### Fitting into Her Life

- Does it work?
- Is it safe?
- Does it save time?
- Does it accomplish more than one task?
- Is it fun or smart?
- Does it make her happy or relaxed?

#### Diagnosis

If your answer to any of these questions is “no,” it might be time to take stock of your product or service offering. Keep in mind that women will resist and reject those things that they *can* control to make up for the things that they can’t (their kids, their security, their life).

— Adapted from *Jusk Ask a Woman*, by Mary Lou Quinlan

## TOUGH CUSTOMERS

*If she had a choice, would she buy from you?*

by Connie Brubaker

For many years, Oprah’s theme song was “I’m Every Woman.” For my part, I feel that I’ve already passed through so many key stages of a woman’s life that I can now speak for every woman . . . or at least for every woman consumer.



#### Connie’s Comments

I’ve been the naïve teenager desperate to look fashionable. I’ve been the penny-poor college student trying to furnish my first apartment. I’ve been the newlywed wife eager for her first home.

I’ve been the mother forced to choose between new shoes for the kids or groceries. And I’ve also been the successful businesswoman struggling to balance family and career.

I’ve been the empty-nester discovering some of the perks of maturity: a day at the spa, a new sports car, apple martinis, shopping with friends.

I’ve been the grandmother learning to contend with new perspectives — and some new aches and pains.

And after literally a lifetime of research, I’ve discovered 4 ways a business can improve sales to women — and in the process make all its customers, men and women, happier and more loyal.



**1. LISTEN TO ME.** After 27 successful years in business, Canadian home builder Shane Homes was faced with increasing competition. Unsure if its cookie-cutter designs were still meeting the changing needs of the people who actually lived in the homes, the company set up focus groups composed entirely of women to learn how to make its homes more family friendly.

The participants said they wanted amenities like larger pantries and kitchen windows that allowed mothers to watch their kids playing outside. Shane Homes incorporated many of these suggestions in its new plans and, as a result, its revenues doubled within 6 years.

Female customers are telling you all the time what they want, but so many companies simply pretend to listen while continuing to do business as usual. Don’t follow that example. Instead, set up focus groups, ask front-line personnel to share customer comments with managers, and really take

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- **Quote of the Month**

# Today's women are demanding, but loyal, customers

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the time to address the needs and desires that you hear from them.

**2. GIVE ME INFORMATION.** Whether it's a financial advisor, realtor, doctor, hairdresser or mechanic, we want to deal with an expert familiar with our concerns. Staying current with women's needs can be challenging because of increased levels of education, income, independence and networking, but it's definitely worth the effort.

Be careful not to patronize your fe-

male customers, though — remember, we're quick to notice a raised eyebrow or a condescending tone in your voice. If you suggest that we can't understand such a complex matter, watch out!

**3. DON'T WASTE MY TIME.** Calling a customer service line recently, I almost screamed in frustration at the inability to talk to a live person — and get real answers — within a reasonable time.

Today's women are busier than ever, which is why online shopping and self-checkout lanes are becoming so popular. It's no longer true that time is money; for most of us, time is more valuable than money.

Nicole Miller blogged about a medical office that had installed a cappuccino machine in the waiting room. That missed the point: what women re-

ally want are shorter waits.

**4. FORM A RELATIONSHIP WITH ME.** Naturally, I want a friendly greeting when I enter a store or make a call. But this is about more than that.

Some of my favorite companies are Amazon.com, Mary Kay, Jiffy Lube and my dry cleaner. Why? Because they know my purchase history, my preferences, my account numbers and my address. That not only saves me time, it also makes me feel appreciated as a customer.

Women appreciate the little things: a well-lit parking lot, a clean restroom, a child-friendly waiting room. We want to be respected and appreciated. And if we're not, we're perfectly ready to take our business elsewhere.

**WANT TO IMPROVE YOUR SALES TO WOMEN?** Sign up for one of Connie's informative, insightful and fun workshops on *Women's Role in the New World Market*. Choose from:

- *The Difference Between Men & Women and How They Buy*
- *Marketing to Women*
- *Selling to Women*

Connie Brubaker is a certified Integrity Systems® business consultant and professional speaker who focuses on sales, customer service and leadership.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

*"Always, always value women and realize how incredibly intelligent they are."*

— Carol Black, President of Lifetime Television