



# GuestRelationsTraining.com

## Enhancing Guest Relations for Sports and Entertainment Venues 2010

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*Ruby Newell-Legner is considered the pre-eminent Customer Satisfaction Expert in the Sports & Leisure Industry today.*

*For over 2 decades Ruby has been helping organizations make exceptional customer service a way of life.*

*"Great customer service starts with giving your employees the skills they need to succeed."*

*Ruby Newell-Legner,  
Fan Loyalty &  
Retention Expert*

## Building Fan Loyalty through Positive Communication

*By Ruby Newell-Legner, Certified Speaking Professional*

"Congratulations on your first step towards the presidency of the National Speakers Association, Ruby." That was the unique way Sam Silverstein (Past president of the National Speakers Association- NSA) chose to tell me I had been elected to the NSA Board of Directors. What an incredible, well crafted greeting! Although I had not acknowledged any desire to pursue that position, he certainly planted the seed when he called to tell me the news.

So today I thought I would address the words you choose and the impact they have on your professional image.

*Customer Service Sucks!* That was a title my new book writing coach suggested. "Sucks" happens to be one of my favorite words but for some reason the title didn't resonate with me. Yes, I hear poor customer service stories every day but I couldn't bring myself to put a negative statement like that on the front cover of a book with my name on it.

And, yes, I am working on saying that word less after I used it one day in a presentation and the manager who hired me came up after my program and stated, "Ya know Ruby, we are working diligently to encourage our young professionals to eliminate that kind of vocabulary...so it is really challenging when YOU choose to use it when you provide training for us." Point well taken!

Please see *Fan Loyalty* on page 3

## Rule Enforcement Etiquette for Promoting Positive Fan Conduct

*By Ruby Newell-Legner, Certified Speaking Professional*

While consulting with a very popular Amusement Park Company with venues throughout North America, I learned that they had numerous complaints the season prior because customers reported being treated rudely by the young staff members. When I asked for specifics, they shared that the organization had recently changed their smoking policy. Because it was an outdoor facility, they decided to determine "smoking areas" and were wise to make those sections easily identifiable by painting all the benches in the designated smoking areas a specific color. The complaints were coming from smokers who had been approached by young staff members enforcing the new rule.

I can imagine how some of the confrontations ensued... Can't you just see a timid teenager approaching a smoker with words like "Uh, YOU can't smoke here!"?

Please see *Etiquette* on page 2

**Ruby's Clients Include:**

**Allen County War  
Memorial Coliseum**  
**AmericanAirlines Arena**  
**Amway Arena**  
**Aramark**  
**Arrowhead Stadium**  
**BC Place**  
**Billie Jean King National  
Tennis Center**  
**Canad Inns Stadium**  
**Centerplate**  
**Dodge Arena**  
**Dolphin Stadium**  
**E Center**  
**General Motors Place**  
**Golden State Warriors**  
**Heinz Field**  
**Major League Baseball  
Mellon Arena**  
**Orlando Magic**  
**Qwest Center Omaha**  
**Ralph Wilson Stadium**  
**RCA Dome**  
**Rexall Place**  
**Scotiabank Place**  
**United States Tennis  
Association**  
**US Indoor Soccer  
Association**  
**US Swim School Assoc.**

"The DNA of the  
 People Business is  
 Customer Service."

Ruby Newell-Legner, CSP

**Etiquette from page 1**

So I asked the million dollar question during my meeting with the client. "What HAVE you taught your staff to say?" The group of executives looked at each other for a minute as if waiting for someone else to answer the question. Finally, they took out their pens and wrote themselves a note ... remember to teach staff HOW to enforce new rules.

For 16 years we tell children not to talk to strangers and then we hire them for their first job and put them in a new role that requires they talk to strangers...and we don't give them the words they need to use to succeed. I am happy to share that we crafted a positive greeting and encouraged the young park staff to approach smokers and say this, "Let me show you where the smoking areas are in the park. They are easy to find. Just look for the blue benches. Walk with me and I will show you where the closest one is to our current location."

In the training session I designed for all of their locations, I reviewed many of the elements that go into positive rule enforcement. I coached the staff members how to enforce the rules using these tips:

**Educate your guests - don't lecture them.** Rule Enforcement can easily come across as scolding.

**Give the guest the benefit of the doubt.** When you need to let your customers know about a rule they are breaking or attempting to break...say this "Perhaps you are unaware that..." then state the rule in a friendly manner.

**Refer to all policies as "guidelines"** and you will find it much more palatable for your customers. Don't call it a "Policy."

**To add integrity to the guideline, add the reason or the goal of the rule...**for example "we have a new guideline to enhance your game experience."

**State rules in a positive manner and clarify the specific purpose of the rule in your explanation.** Start with beginning statements like this:

"To maintain a safe environment..."

"To keep the view clear for all our fans..."

"To enhance everyone's game experience..."

"For your child's safety..."

**To support the rule and give it some backing, share who established the rule.** When the new bag size limitation came out for the stadiums, we crafted this response after so many fans wanted to argue with the "stupid management or team owners" that came up with the rule. "For your safety, the NFL has determined the largest size bag that you can bring into the stadium is 12x12x12." This clarified that it wasn't a local decision by stating it was an NFL ruling so it was non-negotiable. (Note that the specific dimensions stated may vary.)

**Whenever granting a privilege, combine it with praise.** "I am confident that you understand that this is the exception to the rule and won't expect it in the future."

Most importantly, remember to train your staff on how to handle predictable situations and give them guidelines to make judgment calls when necessary. A well prepared team of event staff can promote positive fan conduct and create a truly extraordinary experience for your fans.

*Fan Loyalty* from page 1

Since that day, I take special note on the words I choose and the image it may leave. I listen for good examples of positive responses. Following are a few:

**Non-evasive questions** - During a recent visit to a new recreation facility, I requested a tour. The guide, Leigh Jackson, the Assistant Director of Campus Recreation for Outdoor Recreation, so graciously asked, "Are those comfortable shoes? It is about a 5 minute walk." I wasn't sure if she was aware that I had a total hip replacement almost 5 years ago, and I didn't know if she was just gently letting me know it would be a long walk...but the way she stated it was caring and informative without showing any form of judgment. After listening to her share the many details of the New Leadership Challenge Course at Georgia Tech, I am confident that Leigh was the kind of person who chose her words to be supportive and kind. A less sensitive individual might have worded the statement, "It's a long walk, are you sure you can make it?"

**Customer centered responses** - I frequently hear "No problem" in response to a customer. Although an upbeat tone of voice in which it is delivered usually "sells" the statement into being a positive comment, I think there is a better option. "My Pleasure" is the recommended response at every Ritz Carlton Property because they focus on "serving the customer." Sounds a lot better doesn't it? They diligently train their staff to choose their responses carefully. To bring home the lesson, they frequently reference their role as, "ladies and gentleman serving ladies and gentleman."

**Positive statements** - "You'll have to ..." is a typical start on a sentence when there is an already established protocol in place when specific steps are required of the customer. When starting the statement in that manner, it puts the whole responsibility back on the customer and although the next step might truly be their responsibility, it would sound so much better if it was stated differently. "The best thing to do is ..." allows the procedure enforcer to develop a partnership and a positive perception during the discussion. The end of the statement can be the same, but this opening softens the delivery and makes it sound like you want to share "the scoop" with the patron. By just changing the opening part of the rule statement, you can garner the customer's respect AND share the rule or process in a positive way.

A good way to enhance your word choice is to pay close attention to the look on the person's face when you are speaking. When they do the "You've got to be kidding" look, that should be noted. Then listen for ways you can change the statement to elicit a better response. There are examples all around us, just perk up your ears and take note as you go through your day to day activities. By enhancing our word choices, perhaps there won't be any reason to write a book titled "Customer Service Sucks!"

*Call Ruby today at 303.933.9291 to learn how to design and implement your staff development and recognition program. After presenting more than 1900 programs in eleven countries, and working with 15 professional sports teams, Ruby has the experience and expertise to set your staff up for a great season.*

### **Ruby's Top 10 Reminders for Being a Successful Event Supervisor**

1. Be a **positive role model**. You are the example that your staff watches every day.
2. **Support your co-workers** and your entire management team. What you say about others says more about you than it does about them.
3. **Listen** more than talk. A true leader encourages two-way communication.
4. **Be flexible** - when you ask for and listen to your staff's ideas, they become part of the solution.
5. **Be a coach** not a judge by being developmental not punitive.
6. Its ok for people to make **mistakes** - its how people learn.
7. **Sleep on those big decisions**, re-read memos before distributing and make sure they are fair and clear.
8. **Praise** in public, share failure and counsel in private.
9. Don't bark orders and tell people what to do - **ask for assistance**.
10. When identifying your focus, **set priorities daily**. Ask yourself: which task is most important to the "Big Picture?"

Call Ruby's Office at 303.933.9291 to schedule a **FREE** 30-minute phone consultation session on planning your next training.

## Client Spotlight

“ Ruby’s enthusiasm and high energy presentation commanded the audience’s attention and kept them active and participating each step of the way. The positive response to Ruby’s presentation was shared by both Warriors and Arena Staff alike. Katie Flier, Assistant Box Office Manager said, “Ruby’s program is a fun way to be reminded what makes a successful customer service program.” Sandra Coleman, Supervisor for Levy Restaurants thought “Ruby’s program was very educational, informative, and enlightening. My life skills and leadership abilities will benefit.”

Not only was Ruby’s presentation well received by our Arena Staff members but it was also effective in changing the way they interact with our fans. We have seen a difference in the way the staff approaches confrontational situations, the way they address the fans when speaking to them and their usage of the “Ruby Point” to direct fans in the right direction.

We are pleased with our decision to have Ruby teach our staff members the importance of customer service, leadership, and team work as it has made a lasting impression from which we are seeing results. Ruby is definitely a one of a kind who is highly respected by the Golden State Warriors for the impact she has made within our organization.

Sincerely,

Neda K. Barrie, Senior Executive Vice President of Business Operations  
The Golden State Warriors

For additional resources and to sign up for Ruby’s **FREE Electronic Newsletter “Great Customer Service for Leisure Professionals”** visit [GuestRelationsTraining.com](http://GuestRelationsTraining.com)



*Specializing in Guest Relations Training  
for the Sports and Entertainment Industry*

**Ruby’s training sessions are perfect for:**

- ▶ **Event Staff**
- ▶ **Security Personnel**
- ▶ **Parking Lot Attendants**
- ▶ **Ticket Sellers**
- ▶ **Concessionaires**
- ▶ **Catering Employees**
- ▶ **Ushers**
- ▶ **Housekeeping**
- ▶ **Merchandise Sellers**
- ▶ **Ticket Takers**
- ▶ **Supervisors & Front-Line Staff**

**Ruby**Speaks

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