

Communicating with the Customer

- Kenn Wildes -

(Notes taken by Dean Petrich)

Northwest Pianos, Bellevue

Seattle Chapter PTG

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Knowing how to communicate effectively with the customer sustains and increases business. Dealing with the customer is an art. The most important thing is relating with the customer first, tuning the piano second, and all other things after that.

There are ten factors to keep in mind:

1. Goals
2. Customer Point of View
3. Confidence
4. How to Create Trust and Connection
5. Place Responsibility on the Customer
6. Educate
7. Plant Seeds
8. Explain Your Work
9. It's a Show
10. Effective Technician Series

GOALS OF AN EFFECTIVE TECHNICIAN

1. You must enjoy what you're doing.
2. We want repeat customers
3. Earn good income. We want our income to increase over time.
4. Get more and bigger jobs from tunings and opportunities. The tuning is the gateway
5. Create meaning with your work.
6. Leave a trail of people happy with their pianos and your work.
7. The better you are as a technician, the less you have to go back to service the piano.

CUSTOMER POINT OF VIEW

Sources of Income

Homes (customer)

Teachers (teachers have students)

Schools (music department, teachers, main office, custodians)

Restaurant (manager & owner)

Stages (pianist & stage manager)

Communicating with the Customer

Home

The piano is special and in their own private space.

They will always call you if they trust you.

They want their problems to be heard and understood. The customer is always right.

- If there is a problem, the answer is “Yes.” They want to be heard, whether they are right or wrong. Say yes, because their point is valid, subtle though it may be.
- Get more information
- Get acceptance to continue.

Institutions

Developing a relationship with institutions, like schools, stages, churches, restaurants, etc., take time and must be cultivated. Meet all the people who have anything to do with the piano and get to know them.

Two Kinds of Talk

1. The Piano
2. Personal Talk

Always talk piano. Maybe talk personal. Be sensitive as to what country they are from. Speak to their interests and concerns. People who are difficult to communicate with (foreign languages, set in mind whatever) need little talk, clear action, and sometimes some free service, like cleaning the piano.

CONFIDENCE

- I can do it. Either I have the resources to do it myself or I have access to people and tools that would make it happen.
- People want someone who knows what they are doing. They like to hear the technician say, “I’ll take care of it.”
- The internet is now available in your pocket for information on prices, availability, specific answers, etc.

TRUST & CONNECTION

- At the door, smile, shake their hand, and thank them for having you come. Touch and eye contact start a good connection.
- Start slowly. Take your time.
- Talk reveals who you are, reveals your knowledge, reveals that you care.
- Ask simple questions. One thing leads to the next.
- Care about them. Ask about names. Enjoy the pet. Comment and compliment.
- Always stay aware of how you are talking. Watch their body language if you are saying too much or not enough. How are they receiving your communication?

Communicating with the Customer

- How long should you talk during the total time? Ten minutes to thirty minutes is about right for a home visit. Most of the talk should be professional talk during the first visit. Later visits can become more personal.
- Talk adds value. Sometimes the piano needs very little, or it might need more than they realized. What they will remember the longest is what you did and said.
- Often the history of the piano will tell you why it is in the condition that it is in, and then you can explain this to the customer. It gives the customer a bigger picture.
- KIDS. Often the whole reason why the piano is being tuned is for the kids. The kids don't really know much; however, the understanding you are giving to the child means a lot. Tell the child, "I'm doing this for you." The child's progress depends on a piano that is in tune and that works well.
- When you leave the house, thank them, look them in the eye and shake their hands. They brought you into their houses, they gave you money. Every single tuning is a small blessing.

PLACE RESPONSIBILITY ON THEM

- All work that is necessary for the piano is their responsibility.
- This includes a follow-up tuning. Tell them that it is guaranteed that it will go out of tune and needs another tuning and will need an additional tuning in the near future. After putting in all new felts during a regulation, let them know that those adjustments will change and will need to be re-adjusted. Voicing often requires a return call. Schedule these appointments with the customer at the time. If they don't want to schedule then, it is their responsibility to schedule it later.
- Show them what you are doing, how the piano works, and what the piano needs. Involve the customer with some of the work.

EDUCATE

Think in Levels

- There are three playing levels: beginning, intermediate and advanced. Then break each of those into three levels: beginning beginner, intermediate beginner, and advanced beginner, etc.
- An upright piano does not belong in an advanced category. Rather than putting the piano down, explain that this is just a beginner piano. Do not put a negative spin on their piano: don't say "You have a bad piano." Instead, explain where this piano is on the scale, and what work it might need, but never say it is a piece of junk.
- *Objectively rank the piano, tell what its limitations are, and what work it needs.*
- Talk about the time line with the child. Your child is just about to get into the advanced level and this piano is not good enough for your child's level. It is time to upgrade your piano: your child is too good for it.

Communicating with the Customer

- Always try to find something positive to say about the piano. “It has a gentle touch, powerful tone, the case matches the furniture,” etc. It’s great that they have a piano. You’re there and they’re paying you. You are there for them.
- All pianos need work. No pianos are perfect. There is always something to be done, including new pianos. Pianos go out of tune a little bit every day.
- The need for tuning falls into three categories:
 - Your ability to hear. (Some people can’t hear if it’s out of tune.)
 - Your ability to forgive or tolerate. (Some people don’t care if their piano is out of tune. When something bothers them, it’s time.)
 - Your ability to afford
- Stability is the key. Seattle is a great place for piano stability.
 - Sun & heat changes. Sitting in the sun might harm the piano in short time.
 - Humidity. Recommend a hygrometer/thermometer for the customer so the customer can chart what changes are happening.
- Put a priority level of each job.
 - Explain which action will make the biggest difference and which will make the least.
- We are there for the big picture.
Always expect to do a little bit for free on each piano: bench repairs, issues with temperature and humidity, light, cleaning. Reschedule large jobs.

PLANT SEEDS

Listing what the piano needs will turn into future work.

Search for your recommendations on the computer. If you can have a way to access your records, you have more power and opportunity for the future.

EXPLAIN YOUR WORK TODAY

- Tell them the quote is good for only six months. Your belief, knowledge, understanding, and the cost of parts changes over time.
- It’s a choice when you show a customer what the piano needs. If you are confident that a quick repair will not create other problems, it is worth taking care of it right away.
- It’s a mystery about what you do. If you reveal what it is, the mystery is gone. If you plan on fixing it for free, show them and do it. Otherwise, if they do not know how you fixed the problem, no matter how quickly you fixed it, they will remain amazed at your expertise and knowledge and they will recommend you.

IT'S A SHOW

Tuning

If you want them to hear aural tuning, maybe start by pitch-raising bottom to top, and then do an aural technique for maybe ten minutes.

If no one is listening, just pound the piano in and go from bottom to top.

People want to hear something interesting played on the piano after it is tuned.

Most people can't tell if pianos are out of tune, but they can tell a beautiful song.

Phone

Call the day before to confirm.

Use time windows. Call before or during the time window.

Always call if you are running behind schedule.

When meeting someone, call them thirty minutes ahead so you can meet on time.

EFFECTIVE TECHNICIAN SERIES

1. Talk
2. Longevity
3. Tuning: stability to speed
4. Travelling workshop
5. 80/20 rule with tech or 5/95)
6. Regulation: diagnosis & options
7. Regulation: standard methods & philosophy, including Sauter technique
8. Voicing diagnosis & options
9. Service: partial vs. full options
10. Business; marketing & networking & development