



## Where Dollars Go!

In some of my most recent sessions, I have put out the idea that there is a big difference between understanding things “conceptually” and understanding things “experientially.” The idea is supported by doing role plays or group exercises and hopefully putting good “conceptual” ideas into action in everyday life.

My real awakening to this difference came in a conversation with an amazing member of the LW trainers group from Hub Barton, Jacqueline Plateel. At the beginning of one of our coaching calls she couldn’t wait to tell me how her work in Habits 3 and 4 (conceptual work) has come to life working with the people in her office. She had an experience that transformed the concepts of “First Things First,” (acting on what is important) and “Win-Win” (the habit of making sure all parties win). Clearly there was no disguising the power of actually “getting it” in the moment and the good news is that she now owns the lessons for life because of the “experience.”

Here’s a concept for you: “people repeatedly return to businesses (and refer others) and spend their dollars based on the emotional connection they have with that business.” It’s been a few years now since I read an article from Gallup suggesting their research into neuroeconomics (fastest growing segment of neuroscience) proved that people spend 23% more with organizations with whom they have an emotional connection. Conversely, a lack of that connection creates a 13% deficit.

Like you, I get the “concept” and understand the power of our emotions when it comes to making buying decisions. And, I have seen all the research provided by fmri (functional magnetic resonant imagery) that suggests that the emotional side of a person’s brain “lights up” every time they discuss a company they are emotionally connected to. We are all smart people here; it just makes sense.

Move forward now to the middle of November 2008 and my trip to the new offices of Hub Ontario, and nice new offices they are! Right across the four-lane highway (you can see it from the meeting room) is my favorite of all hotels: The Hilton Garden Inn. This style of hotel is perfect for me and is built for the business traveler. As opposed to the more expensive and often “colder” feel of full serve hotels, The Hilton Garden Inn is more like a home away from home for me.

Challenge #1... nothing but warehouses and industry surround the Hilton, and I don't have a car; plus it's impossible to cross the highway. That means I am stuck at The Hilton Garden Inn for everything, which is usually just fine for a simple guy like myself.

Challenge #2... on my second day I walked within 2 feet of the front desk where 2 customer service agents were apparently looking at something behind the counter. They never noticed I had passed by so I decided to pass by again to see if they would recognize a "paying customer." Nope!!! After my second pass I got their attention to share my experience which left both of them speechless, not a word was said. Needless to say what I experienced was part of a general malaise throughout the hotel.

Enter... The Homewood Suites, which is on the same side of the highway as the office and next to a small plaza with restaurants and coffee shops (drat... no Starbucks). Note that the Homewood Suites is also in the Hilton family and is technically considered one rung lower on the food chain than The Hilton Garden Inn. My second visit to the wonderful people at Hub Ontario was booked at The Homewood Suites, primarily to give me access to the amenities and proximity to the office.

What I experienced the next couple of days was completely unexpected yet amazingly positive and heartwarming. In contrast to The Hilton Garden Inn, EVERYONE (no exceptions) at The Homewood Suites made a point of getting to know me and of making my stay wonderful. From the maintenance people, to the van driver, to the housekeepers... everyone stopped, made eye contact and asked how I was and what they could do.

Here's the difference: conceptually I have understood for a long time that it's the emotional connection that encourages people to spend their money with businesses. But, until having a personal experience as dramatic as this in such close proximity within 30 days, I just didn't fully get it. I want you to know that when I think of returning to my friends at Hub Ontario, I think of staying at The Homewood Suites and something inside of me feels good and warm. This tells me that their "plan" to connect with me at a person-to-person level really worked, and that as long as I travel to that area, I will spend my money where my heart is. And, how many people do you think I have told this story to?!

Summing this up: know there are no long term benefits to just going through the motions of customer service or experience. The hotels are both perfectly put together and taken care of, the amenities are on par... it's the people and their commitment to getting to know me that makes the difference.

Until the next edition of *Road Trips*,

Life is good...

KW