

By Bill Guertin

The 800-Pound Gorilla

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Are You Green and Growing?

I was giving a public seminar on customer service recently, and received two very interesting reviews from two different participants in the audience.

One wrote: "Great information! I've been in the service industry for over 25 years, but it's always nice to have a refresher on some of the things I could be improving on. Thank you!"

The other wrote: "Waste of my time. Nothing new."

Were these two people at the same seminar? I checked the top of the review sheet. Yes, they were in the same room at the same time, listening to the same guy. Even more interesting, it appeared that both of these people happened to work for the same company.

Just for fun, I called the individual who had sent these two people to the seminar. I learned that the first reviewer was one of the very best service providers in the entire company, and the other person was only a marginal performer.

Isn't it interesting? Those who are open to being better are most often the ones that are near the top of their game already. And one of the reasons they're at the top is that they never stop learning.

Never.

How many books on your chosen profession have you read in the past 6 months?

How many CD's or audio programs on self-improvement or education have you listened to?

How many seminars have you attended, on behalf your company or on your own? Have you ever considered attending a seminar on your own, to benefit you, without the financial assistance of your company?

Are you at the point where you don't feel you need any more training? If so, that's probably a sign that you need it most of all.

The very best speakers and trainers in the world come together once a year at the National Speakers Association conference. Many of them come for the camaraderie, but most come to learn from their peers. They want to continue to grow, and NSA is one of the best forums for them to do that. I'm humbled when I see those I admire in the profession furiously taking notes in the audience, always improving, looking for that one spark of an idea that wasn't there before.

These are people that speak for a living, and they all recognize that in order to improve, they must be constantly honing their craft.

What about you? Are you green and growing, or stiff and stagnant? If you're an owner or manager, are you allowing your employees opportunities to improve outside of what you've trained them?

There are several resources available. If you're a manager or small business owner, professional development magazines like *Training* (www.trainingmag.com) and *Sales & Marketing Management* (www.salesandmarketing.com) are wonderful monthly publications that get into the essence of what you could be doing to help your staff improve. The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) can also be a valuable place to look (www.astd.org).

My wife has often commented about the number of books I own. Yes, it's true that I have a lot of them. I'm working on at least 5 or 6 of them at any one time. But I consider myself very green and growing.

Wherever you are on the scale, it's never too late to begin.

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