



**MORE Powerful Marketing Minutes**  
50 New Ways to Develop Market Leadership

## **Book Excerpt**

### **Chapter 28**

#### **Nobody Noticed**

On a beautiful Sunday afternoon in October, I flew from Melbourne to Singapore. Just another day, another international journey.

Except that it wasn't just another day. It was my birthday. And nobody noticed!

As a result, the airline and the hotel that I encountered that day missed a huge opportunity to provide this customer with an extraordinary experience.

Instead, I received their 'ordinary customer experience.' And yet there was really no excuse for this.

While checking in for my flight, the customer service person at the counter used my passport details to create the 'Express Lane' immigration card that they give out to all Business and First Class customers. That card has my date of birth details.

This airline is one of my two favourites, and I have already attained Platinum Level status in their frequent flyer program, because of my loyalty and the number of long-haul trips I've made between Australia and Asia. Their main competitor on Australia to Asia flights sent me a birthday card that arrived two days before this journey.

Upon arrival in Singapore I proceeded to the well-established, five-star Asian hotel chain where the three-day workshop I was conducting was being held. This time the lady at the check-in counter took my passport and completed the various boxes on the hotel's registration card. I noticed that she properly recorded both my passport details and my date of birth. Again, there was no recognition of the significance of the date.

On reflection, I saw that the airline and hotel staff were well trained in filling in forms quickly and efficiently. But they take no notice of the information being recorded. I am just another customer to be moved as quickly and efficiently as possible from the check-in desk to the hotel room.

Now I do not expect birthday cakes and birthday songs from either of these organizations.

I do think, however, that they would have systems in place so that a personal greeting could be proffered. On the airline, the chief cabin officer always walks around, introduces himself/herself, and personally welcomes aboard their Frequent Flyer Program customers. I would have been extremely pleased had he quietly added, "Oh, Mr. Howard, I see that it is your birthday today. Happy Birthday from all of us at XYZ Airlines." Instead, he only checked to see if I needed an immigration form for arrival into Singapore.

At the hotel, why not have a system in place for the general manager to send a short birthday note to the rooms of the guests who are travelling away from home on their special day? I am not suggesting that they need to send flowers or a bottle of wine, but just a personal note (or even better a phone call) would go a long way in telling the guest that they are not just another customer in residence on a typical day.

There was nothing to fault in the normal service delivered by either the airline or the hotel. Both were efficient, friendly, and up to standard.

On any other day, the service delivery would have been proper and sufficient.

But this wasn't any other day. It was my birthday.

And hence the opportunity for an extraordinary customer experience was missed. By both.

**KEY POINT:**

A customer's birthday is a great opportunity to provide an extra-ordinary level of personal attention and/or service.

**TAKING ACTION:**

Are you capturing data about customers that could be put to better use?

Are your people good at completing forms, yet take no notice of the information being collected?

Are you collecting unnecessary or useless information?

What important events in your customers' lives are you overlooking?

*This Chapter is excerpted from MORE Powerful Marketing Minutes by Steven Howard.*

**The Author**

*Steven Howard is a Melbourne-based marketing consultant, author, conference speaker, and Non-Executive Director in both the profit and non-profit fields.*

*Visit his web site, [www.howard-marketing.com](http://www.howard-marketing.com) for valuable information and links on marketing, customer retention, branding, and corporate image management or to sign up for his free weekly newsletter The Monday Morning Marketing Memo and his marketing blog.*

*He is a positioning specialist, whose 30-year marketing and sales career in Asia and Australia has covered a wide variety of fields, ranging from consumer electronics to publishing and from a national airline to personal financial products.*

*He is President of Howard Marketing Services, which provides consultancy and project management services in the areas of Marketing Management, Product Development, Positioning Strategies, Customer Retention Strategies, New Product Launches, Event Management and Brand Management.*

*He consults on a regular basis to companies in the financial services, industrial products, consumer products, restaurants, petroleum, publishing and hospitality fields.*

### **Contact details**

**Phone:** (61-3) 5428-1388

**Fax:** (61-3) 5428-1399

**E-mail:** [steven@howard-marketing.com](mailto:steven@howard-marketing.com)

**Website:** <http://www.howard-marketing.com>

**Blog:** <http://www.howard-marketing.com/marketingblog>

**Free Newsletter:** Receive Steven Howard's free weekly marketing newsletter, the **Monday Morning Marking Memo**, by subscribing at [www.howard-marketing.com](http://www.howard-marketing.com).