

# IDEAS

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THE TECH BEAT | BY JAMES HARDING

## THAT PERSONAL TOUCH

Modern technology has made communicating with people so easy that many of us have forgotten how to do it well. We've gotten so wrapped up in the "quick and easy" way of doing things that some of us have lost sight of our ultimate goal: building meaningful, long-term relationships with our clients.

This is not to say that we shouldn't use modern tools like social media, texting and email, but maybe we should take a minute to consider when those tools are most effective and when a simple phone call or personal letter might do more good.

I recently spoke with a client who tried contacting my store via our website. He was interested in purchasing a piano from us and was frustrated that nobody ever returned his message. Horrified at this breach in our customer service, I looked up his message and found that we had responded to it via an email that he either never got or accidentally deleted it. I apologized to him and made things right, but it made me rethink our communication plan and focus on a more "back to basics" approach.



**In a tech-focused society, a phone call and handwritten note will make you stand out from the pack**

### VIP SERVICE

We need to respond to every customer with a courtesy call. Yes. People are busy, and we'll probably have to leave a voicemail, but at least the client will know we made an effort. If a client is looking to make a significant investment with us, we

need to provide them with our personal cell phone numbers so they can reach us whenever they might need help without having to navigate a computerized phone menu. After the phone call, we can send an email and leave it up to the client to communicate with us in the way he/she prefers. That "VIP" service demonstrates how important these folks are to us and how present we want to be in their instrument selection process.

This philosophy is doubly important when a prospective client tries to call our store. My biggest pet peeve in retail is watching an employee ignore their telephone. As part of our "back to basics" initiative, we are working to help our staff view each incoming phone call as a critical lifeline for our business. No matter what the client needs, he or she should be able to reach a human being quickly and reliably within three rings or fewer. To accomplish this with our limited staff, we have implemented a new phone system that offers a short, five-option menu. With the press of a single button, our clients will reach a human being without exception. We can even press a button at our desks and route incoming

calls to our cell phones if we're walking around our showroom, warehouse, etc. Our goal is to prevent clients from ever having to leave a voicemail. But, if we get overwhelmed and they do leave a message, that message goes to our cell phones, and we can return calls immediately.

### OFFERING THAT PERSONAL TOUCH

We've also gotten into the habit of sending personal notes to our clients. Whether it's a quick "I miss you!" note or a "thank you for stopping in" card, we try to touch base with our best clients in a way that stands out from our competition and shows them how much we appreciate them. Many times, they tell us how nice it was to get something in the mail that wasn't a bill or junk mail.

We still use social media to help people learn to use their digital pianos. We use email to announce upcoming events, and we still text funny music photos to our friends in the business, but we've found that "the personal touch" is a powerful tool in today's impersonal society. **MI**

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