



## **Expo preparation – a local small business case study**

For me, getting ready for the Northland Business Expo was the equivalent of a business relaunch.

Previously I operated out of Wellington and many of my clients were large corporates, in the public sector, or overseas multinationals. I am now based in Kerikeri and my target market is local businesses. I need to let them know who I am, and what I do.

As well as booking the booth at the Expo I needed to think about getting business cards reprinted, updating my website, and writing and printing relevant promotional materials. This process brought me into contact with a few local businesses and analysing my experiences as a customer felt a good way to show you what I do.

At the first business the owner greeted me at a tall reception desk. I explained firstly that I had a tight deadline and although Easter weekend was approaching I needed the job completed in a week. It seemed that this would be possible so we went on to talk through some more details.

I explained what I had in mind, mentioned that I had a DVD of artwork with me which just needed a few tweaks and asked if we could sit down and price up some options. We sat in the reception area where there were two chairs, a low table and a lot of clutter. There was no PC there for us to look at the artwork. The owner passed the DVD to a graphic designer (in another room) and asked him to check that the file formats were ok. He confirmed they were, a little tidying up was needed but this would be low cost.

Paul immediately gave me a quote on the business cards.

I then started talking about what else I was trying to achieve and discussed sizes and material options for the banners and promotional boards. Paul showed me the materials available and talked about the relative benefits and costs of each of them. I made a decision on materials and size and Paul again gave me a quote.

I thanked the owner, told him I would make a decision that day, but that I would get a comparison first elsewhere.

At the second business, I entered a large reception area. There were two desks at the back of the room. I wasn't really sure which one to go to, but one of the staff members seemed busy so I went to the other.

As at the first business, I explained about the urgency. I was led to believe they thought this was achievable but tight. I asked to show them the art work I

had. We went over to one of the desk and looked at it there. There was nowhere for me to sit, I had to kneel to see the screen or stand up and bend over across the desk.

As we started talking about the purpose of the promotional materials and the Expo, the girl (Rachel, I think, but I'm not sure as she didn't give me a business card) had lots of suggestions and good ideas of how I could use the banners to give more information about what I do, and to attract more visitors to my booth. She also helped me make a final decision in terms of the size of the banners.

She advised me that a thick paper would give a better finish for the banners and showed me the material. I responded that, as the banners wouldn't be used often, I would prefer vinyl as it would be easier to store.

She gave me a verbal quote for the business cards, but said that the other quotes would have to be done by another staff member. I reminded her of my deadlines and she said I would receive a quote before the end of the day. I told her the best way to contact me was via cellphone as I was often out of the office.

I did not hear from this business until 10:43 am the next day when I received an email quote just for the banners (but to be printed on paper not vinyl as I had specified). I received no quote for the other items we had discussed.

By then I had already given the job to the other business and they had started work.

### **How does this relate to the work I do?**

Both businesses are obviously successful, busy, and have strengths. I am sure that both are good at their core business. But on the basis of spending less than 2 hours with each business I was able to identify a few simple changes that would significantly improve the customer experience and probably boost business for both of them at negligible cost.

### **How did the two customer experiences compare?**

	Business A	Business B
Advertising –How I knew they were there	<p style="text-align: center;">✘</p> <p>Not in the local directory I used. Didn't show in my Google search. Website under construction. I knew they existed because I was referred by a friend.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">✔</p> <p>Multiple entries in yellow pages: signs, graphic design, printers etc. Fully functional website, I have seen the branded vehicles around town.</p>

	Business A	Business B
Could complete in timeframe needed	✓	?
Listened to what I needed and demonstrated understanding : - Speed and completeness of quote - Materials for banner	✓	✗
Added value by making suggestions for impact / use of banners	✗	✓
Gave me their contact details (a business card)	✓	✗
Had a suitable space where we could discuss the job and look at my images on a screen	✗	✗
Quoted for all the promotional materials discussed	✓ verbal only	✗ Verbal for business cards, email for banners, no quote for other items
Used a standard form to record details of my request	✗	✓

## Key messages for the two businesses

### Business A

Generally you did a great job. I am writing this while you are working on my order, so I can't comment on the final product. You won the work though, and I have enjoyed dealing with all of your staff. But I believe you could make the experience even better.

### *Improve your advertising*

- Finish your website so that I can learn more about what you do, see examples, and find you when I do a web search on "kerikeri print" or "kerikeri graphic design".
- Similarly get more entries in the yellow pages and local directories so that I know you exist

### ***Improve the face-to-face experience***

- De-clutter the reception area.
- Have at least one area available where a staff member can use a PC, a customer can be seated and see the screen. We needed this on two occasions:
  - o When I was explaining what I needed before the sale
  - o After the sale when I came in to check the details/proofs and set up with the graphic designer. At this point I even saw different colours on screen because I was standing and he was sitting.
- As business B did, you too could offer a few suggestions for visual impact and marketing signage that would work well for an Expo situation.
- Document the verbal quote so that you and the customer have a record of what has been agreed. I was really nervous about this.

### **Business B**

You could be fantastic printers, I don't know. What I do know is that you have an opportunity to improve your pre-sales process (and probably turnover) by taking a fresh look at the customer experience.

### ***Improve the face-to-face customer experience***

- Let me know who you are. Introduce yourself; give me a business card.
- Take more care listening and documenting the customers requirements; the quote was incomplete and the person who sent it said they hadn't been told I was promised it a day earlier.
- As I have suggested to Business A: Have at least one area available where a staff member can use a PC, a customer can be seated and see the screen.

### ***Remove the delays and steps in the quoting process***

- Both businesses told me this was a simple job. You promised me a quote the same day but didn't deliver on that promise
- Maybe you could cross train your staff, or make suitable staff available, so that they can quote for simple jobs immediately. If you had done that on this occasion you would probably have won the work there and then.

### **How can I help your business?**

This article is just a snapshot; it reflects my individual experience for one transaction type with just two local companies. Businesses are more complex than this. If you invite me to do work for you I will take time to understand your various transaction types, and your customer groups, then observe what the customer experience is across these. You will be surprised how many ideas will come out of even just half a days observations.

Contact us on 021668423, or email us at [sue@customerservicedesign.com](mailto:sue@customerservicedesign.com) to discuss a customer service assessment.