

5 questions with Jackie Dudley

Jackie Dudley, Founder, Professional Etiquette & Protocols

WE'D LIKE TO TRY something different for this month's Lumber 411 column: here's an educational conversation with someone outside the lumber retail industry proper, but with good information to share that can help everyone reading this column. Let us know what you think at info@nelma.org.

Who are you and what do you do?

My name is Jackie Dudley, and, as the founder of Professional Etiquette & Protocols, I provide and teach global etiquette mastery through etiquette consulting. This includes the teaching of better business practices through appropriate etiquette.

Clients I've worked with include those in the financial section, educational institutions, forestry associations, and other groups all up and down the Eastern seaboard. Each training session provided is 100% customized to both maximize the opportunities present and meet the needs of each client and their industry.

Manners matter, and etiquette should never go out of style. We seem to have generations of people who have lost their ability to cross-communicate and/or communicate across sectors, political beliefs, religious beliefs, and more. Culture, age, business acumen and knowledge—whereas these once were common denominators, they now serve more often as dividing factors. The use of manners—to include simple kindness and understanding—helps raise the level of dialogue and fosters better com-

munication. A professional employing good manners in all they say and do presents an immediate point of differentiation from others around them. People want to do business with kind, respectful people.

Three challenges you see in the overall retail industry today?

It's hard to narrow it down to only three! Across all sectors of business, causes beyond our control are causing distress and challenges. Let's look at a few of these challenges.

(1) The disruption of the supply chain for multiple reasons, due to years' worth of compounding circumstances that are beyond the everyday person's ability to shape. Is there anyone in the U.S. who hasn't been affected by supply chain issues?

(2) Aging workforce. This ties in directly to the growing lack of skilled labor across the entire building industry. Multiple entities have launched education programs to draw younger people into the industry (including the Northeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association), but this is a challenge we'll be dealing with for a while.

(3) Rising transportation costs. The cost of oil, the cost of gas, the cost of diesel—any industry, including lumber, which relies on over land transportation is taking a hit.

Number one thing retailers need to keep in mind when working with customers?

Just one? There are so many! Here are my top five suggestions:



Know your product, know what you're selling. PK (product knowledge) is everything. Confidence breeds confidence, and people want to buy from someone who makes them feel confident.

Be trustworthy. If you lose the trust of a customer, it's gone. Show your commitment and trust in their company and business, and you'll get it in return.

Conduct honest business. Especially in this economy and this charged environment. Be the calm, trustworthy, honest voice upon whom your clients can depend.

Clarity. It's not what you said, it's what the customers hears that matters. This ties back to strong product knowledge and trust.