

Veronica Cool: A conversation with Evette & Hector Zuniga

By: Veronica Cool | March 4, 2016



COOL TIPS

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COOL

In a conversation with someone who speaks English as a second language or with an accent, have you noticed yourself speaking loudly? As if the volume of your voice will magically translate the words?

Noticing this trend when folks addressed me or my family, I started to track my own behavior when presented with a similar situation. I discovered that I slowed my verbal cadence or pace in an effort to be considerate.

But sometimes language barriers cannot be overcome with pace or volume. With the changing demographics in the region, there's an increased need to modify your marketing strategies and operational process — not just to be nice, but to have impact, to serve your clients and increase your bottom line.

Case in point: Your Answer Solutions Center, Inc. Evette and Hector Zuniga, partners in marriage, and also business partners. They saw a tremendous need to fill the language gap for the growing Latino population in the United States and launched Your Answer Solutions Center. It's a call-center operation specializing in providing native Spanish-speaking operators and support to call centers and companies with in-house call centers.

'We see the need'

In a recent interview with these innovative entrepreneurs, I asked the key question – why? What propelled you to start something from scratch? "We see the need," says Evette. "Latinos in the United States are growing, with over 57 million people here, and a lot do speak English — but about 70 percent of Hispanics households speak Spanish at home." Evette has over 20 years of experience in the call-center industry, starting from the bottom as an operator, then to quality control, training and, eventually, full operational oversight. Hector, a native of Mexico, has been in the service industry since he was 15.

"Imagine the challenge of not being understood? Specially during an emergency. What if there's a fire? What if I there's a power outage?" says Hector. "I've struggled in this country, as I was learning English ... but I made a point to go to businesses and organizations that understood me, that spoke to me. The companies that made an effort to engage me in Spanish."

Knowing the value of engaging Hispanics, Chinese, Indian, (substitute whatever group you wish, the concept and outcome is exactly the same way) in THEIR way, using their

preferences, whether it is language choice, in-person interactions, social media, mobile or video engagement.

Knowing what your customer needs and satisfying that need is at the core of not only selling but exceptional customer service.

A powerful pair

Hector is leveraging his native expertise to hire very professional, highly qualified bilingual operators who can provide stellar customer service and support to both Spanish-speaking clients and English speakers. Evette brings the industry knowledge to ensure the infrastructure and quality of the call center are top notch.

Evette emphasizes, "We focus on providing this Spanish-language support seamlessly to our clients in conjunction with their current operations and English operators. So our clients see an increase in customer engagement, reduced complaints, and overall rise in customer satisfaction."

The savvy COO, communication manager or supervisor is aware that this is a missed opportunity – engaging a portion of the market that buys their products and services and will need support and technical assistance.

Today, many organizations use alternate solutions, such as referring these calls to "language lines" or getting an interpreter on the line. But Hector warns of the potential challenges of these approaches –"from technical issues (like the calls dropping or disconnecting) to disjointed conversations and dissatisfied client that simply leave." And beware of the legal ramifications of simply tapping a colleague or friend to interpret. For instance, there are confidentiality issues pertaining to patient/doctor or client/attorney relationships. Having a non-certified, appropriately trained interpreter can leave you exposed to legal action and client problems.

During a recent project, we discovered the staff at a health care facility was asking the Spanish-speaking janitor to interpret medical diagnoses and treatment plans to patients. The janitor was kind and patient but had zero medical knowledge and could not effectively relay the message and appropriately communicate with the patient.

The world is changing, with dramatic demographic shifts in population. Businesses and organizations MUST change along with this tide by adopting systems and processes that accommodate clients, patients and communities they serve. Language accommodation is not just nice but a powerful tool to win, engage and retain clients.

Hasta la proxima, amigos!

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