

New Look Is "Us"

"You got rid of the tree!" remarked longtime Cedar Concepts Corporation customers, referring to our old corporate symbol. According to Sales and Marketing rep Amber Merisko, response to the overhauled branding has been very positive – beyond the cosmetic.

"Everybody notices the new logo and colors. People love the business cards because they're so unique." More importantly, explains Amber, who has a lab background, "They say the new beaker design and tagline finally communicate what we do. Our company name has nothing to do with our business. The tree made it more confusing. We'd get inquiries for wood products or treatment."

CCC President Linda Boasmond decided to upgrade our image to reflect the company's growth, professionalism and eye toward future opportunities. She involved employees in the process. "They picked different designs than my first choice," she laughingly recalls. "I tend to like abstract and vivid. They urged me to go with something more practical. We did, and they were right."

The redesign is part of an overall strategy to make communications more useful and attractive to current and potential customers. In addition to launching this e-newsletter, CCC plans to unveil its reworked Web site in May, with more detailed product brochures also on the burner.

Amber vows interactivity will be featured whenever possible. "We're one of the few places with live people answering the phones. We want our technology to be just as customer friendly. Sure, people should think of chemicals when they look at our new logo. We hope they're reminded there's excellent service bubbling inside as well."



CCC Customer Service rep LaVerne Jackson (center) consults with President Linda Boasmond (left) and Purchasing rep Carmen Lopez about an order with special requirements.

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE: CUSTOMER SERVICE

No Problem Too Big

Customers know LaVerne Jackson's rapid-fire, confident voice. That alone is usually sufficient to reassure them, though she can tell you a lot goes into satisfying their needs. One might compare her to those first responders popularized on television – attending to immediate situations, directing traffic and properly addressing emergencies.

"I answer inquiries about pricing, availability, whether we can make a product for someone," says LaVerne. "I handle everything about orders, from scheduling shipping, generating bills of lading, to double-checking product details or addresses for accuracy. If there's a problem, resolution usually starts with me. I answer what I can personally or make sure it gets to the right department. I try to take a friendly approach and get back as fast as possible."

As soon as Production notifies her, LaVerne routinely confirms shipping dates or pricing with customers via e-mail or telephone. She recommends a week to 10 days lead time as the best way to ensure meeting all requirements. "We're trying to shave some time off that," she adds. She may negotiate with Operations if someone has requested an earlier shipping date, or see if a partial order will do until the entire shipment is ready.

Despite 15 years on the job, LaVerne prides herself on continuous improvement. She takes customer service/marketing programs to keep up with changing expectations, purchasing trends and issues. Once or twice annually, she is part of a team that visits major customers locally and primarily on the East Coast. "We talk about products they're buying, improvements we could make, any problems. We spend a couple hours touring the facility and meeting people we interact with."

LaVerne also gets to interface with customers at two industry conferences a year. "I like the networking, honestly. It's surprising how helpful other vendors are." She seems to find balance between the service she provides and the work she enjoys most days in her office, surrounded by promotional gifts from suppliers and pictures of her four grandchildren.

No Problem Too Small

To her co-workers she may be a hard-worker with a teensy efficiency obsession. To many customers, LaVerne Jackson wears a cape and a "S" emblazoned on her chest.

"She's our hero," says Teresa Consentino of the Jeen's International purchasing department. Teresa describes the time a snow storm threatened to delay shipment of an order from CCC to the New Jersey-based Jeen's. "Our trucker said they couldn't do anything for at least a couple of weeks. It would've had a huge impact for us. We get charge backs when we don't meet our customers' deadlines."

Teresa credits LaVerne with quickly flying to the rescue. "She found us another trucker. They were a lot cheaper and moved our stuff in three days. She's also a little angel because now we use that carrier for everything."



We'll Be There. Will You?

CCC representatives plan to be on hand at the following conferences and would welcome the chance to chat with you.

- March 29-30: CMBDC, Chicago
- May 11-12: SCC Supplier's Day, NYC
- May 16-19: AOCS, Phoenix (Booth 505)
- June 22-24: WBENC, Baltimore
- Sept. 22-23: WBDC, Chicago
- Oct. 24-27: NMSDC, Phoenix

While glad she could help, LaVerne considers going the extra mile as within her job description. "Customer service doesn't stop just because you complete the order as specified, if the product's just sitting there, not doing anybody any good. So it wasn't our fault or responsibility. This was still our customer and they weren't happy. If we could fix that somehow, *then* our work was finished." Take *that*, Super Woman.

FYI:

CCC President Linda Boasmond shared her insights in several recent publications:

- **Manufacturing-Today.com:** "Going Global: What Is Your Competitive Edge," by Mona Pearl, Winter 2010 (<http://www.manufacturing-today.com/content/view/1021/>)
- **The Illinois Manufacturer:** "The Changing Face of Business ...Women in Manufacturing," Winter 2010 (<http://ima-net.org/library/tim/TIMwinter10.pdf>)
- **Business Leaders of Color 2009** (http://www.chicago-united.org/pdfs/2009-BLC_Publication.pdf)



Questions? Ideas? Tell Us!

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