

Avoiding 'sins' of bad business

By **BOB QUICK**
The New Mexican

Bernadette Trujillo-Vadurro wants Santa Fe businesses to do better — a lot better — when it comes to customer service.

She wants workers to avoid what she calls the "deadly sins" — including ignoring the customer, over promising and under delivering, incompetence and failure to take responsibility for mistakes — of customer service.

The key to customer service, she said, is whether companies are willing to commit themselves to their



Bernadette Trujillo-Vadurro

employees. "The good organizations are the ones that take time to hire people and to train them," Vadurro said. "Others don't bother to invest in their people."

On Feb. 2 and 3, Vadurro will offer four half-day programs called "Customer Service is Everyone's Business" at the Park Inn and Suites at 2907 Cerrillos Road.

The classes are intended to help employees understand the essential elements needed to make customers feel welcomed and important. Vadurro will discuss service-oriented strategies, tips, techniques and interactions to improve customer service. The cost for the seminars is \$79.

Vadurro is the co-author of two books, *The Service Path* and *Motivational Leaders*. She also is the president of Speakers Live and Leading Edge Training. She has trained workers and managers at Chrysler Corp., Farm Credit Ser-

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vices, Los Alamos National Laboratory and others organizations.

Vadurro comes from an old Santa Fe family — her grandparents owned a grocery store at the corner of Paseo de Peralta, where Frameworks is now, and her grandfather, Frank Ortiz, was elected mayor of Santa Fe in 1952.

"The roots for my interest in customer service go back to my grandmother," Vadurro said. "She always took good care of her customers."

Vadurro worked in state government for almost 15 years, but then she hit a glass ceiling. So she decided to start her own business.

"I tripled my income the second year out," she said. "I've never looked back."

Vadurro continues to look around, however, and she's not very impressed with the state of customer service in her home town.

One reason is the low level of education — New Mexico comes in last in surveys of educational achievement, she said.

In addition, young workers often don't see good examples of customer service among their older colleagues.

Then there's the problem of managers, who often mistreat their subordinates in the work place. "The way manager treat employees is tied to the way those employees treat customers," Vadurro said.

Whether managers or staffers, Vadurro wants them to be aware of the "forbidden" words and phrases that may cause customers to feel negative toward a business or an employee of that business.

At the top of the list is the word "no." To use it, Vadurro said, may result in "immediate alienation."

The best, and worst, of Santa Fe

Which Santa Fe businesses provide superior customer service?

In the restaurant industry, Vadurro is impressed both by the Steaksmith and Cafe Dominic. The steak house, she said, always has good food and "everyone works as a team."

Service is also good at Cafe Dominic, a place Vadurro said is "a jewel in our town."

As for Pranzo, "the food is really good," Vadurro said, "but the service is iffy."

At Red Lobster, on the other hand, "we waited a day and a half for a table, longer for a waiter ... and we had to ask for the check three times."

Among Santa Fe banks, Vadurro ranks First National Bank of Santa Fe as the most "hassle free. They go that extra step to make it" that way, she said. Wells Fargo, on the

other hand, "follows a formula that works for many businesses, but I'm looking for a personal touch," Vadurro said.

As for government agencies, Vadurro was impressed with the music, coffee, cider and Christmas hats on workers at the downtown post office around Christmas.

"It really changed the atmosphere of the place," she said.

She also appreciates the improvements at the state Motor Vehicle Division, which instituted a numbering system to serve customers.

Even so customers often must wait for an hour or more to be served.

"They're not there yet, but they're looking for ways to get there," Vadurro said.

Bob Quick

The words "I don't know" aren't much better. "Customers are not interested in what you do not know. They are interested in what you do know," Vadurro said.

Employees should also avoid, at all cost, the expression "It's not my job." The correct response in such a situation is, "Let me direct you to the person who can assist you with this," Vadurro said.

Among the Santa Fe businesses that will be sending employees to Vadurro's trainings next week are First National Bank of Santa Fe and Santa Fe Indian Hospital.

"Right now we're targeting employees who are in customer-contact

areas," said Bernadette Parnell, manager of First National's branch on Cordova Road. "We have some tellers who have not had much exposure to working in a bank or it may be their first job."

At the Santa Fe Indian Hospital, "we just want to improve the overall quality of care that is rendered to our patients and to the community," said Jim Lyon, the hospital's chief executive officer.

"A lot of times, patients view quality of care maybe not so much the care rendered by a health-care provider as what they see in terms of customer service" provided by other hospital employees, he said.