



# THE LEADER



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## Customer Service Class Great Experience

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Attendance was low at two free customer service training classes in Cabot Wednesday but those who did attend say it was a great experience.

Attendees learned about various issues, including proper attitude, phone etiquette and on-the-job stress.

Paul Vitale, a nationally know speaker and author, presented the class, which was co-sponsored by the Cabot Chamber of Commerce, Cabot Advertising and Promotions Commission and the Arkansas Hospitality Association.

"The Arkansas Hospitality Association had a grant and contacted us and asked if we'd like to host one in Cabot," said the chamber's executive director Mary Jane Sawyer.

The grant came from the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board and was given to provide training to the hospitality industry.

"This seminar on customer service was broader than hospitality - it was geared toward any business that has customer interaction with employees," she said.

Only 11 attended the classes and Sawyer said she was disappointed with the turnout.

"Anyone who didn't choose to send their employees missed out on a great opportunity," said Sawyer. "He's a wonderful trainer and a powerful motivator.

"It was a great opportunity to take advantage of some free training for employees."

Sawyer said she would like to bring Vitale back in the fall to offer another seminar.

"He looks forward to coming back to a larger audience," Sawyer said.

The class touched on many customer service issues, including why customers don't come back and how to provide good customer service.

Vitale said the goals for the class are to "train and motivate Arkansas' work force to deliver superior customer service," to "educate individuals on what can be accomplished through good customer service" and to "help instill community and self-pride in Arkansas' work force."

"I enjoyed having the opportunity to work with individuals in Cabot regarding customer service," Vitale said.

"The participants were quick to answer questions, share ideas and get involved.

"I thought both sessions were successful."

The attendees were asked to put themselves in their customers' places and talk about how they would like to be treated.

Vitale said people need to know the community they work in so they can better help their customers.

Cathy Uhl, owner of Nutrition World in Cabot, said Vitale did a "wonderful job."

"I learned some things," she said. She said the handouts were especially helpful.

"Now maybe I can implement to my employees how important it is not to seem like we're rude or too busy," she said.

"It gives me some paperwork to put behind what we're trying to do."

Uhl brought one of her employees, Diane Williams, with her and said other businesses should have done the same.

"If I was in the restaurant or service business, my employees would have been there," she said.

Williams said she learned a lot from the class.

"He's real energetic and likes a lot of input," said Williams. "In a lot of seminars you just sit there and listen.

"He touched on a lot of things that we've probably all forgotten or just ignored."

Williams said in her job at Nutrition World, as well as her job at an auction house in North Little Rock, she always deals with a lot of people.

"It's always nice to have an update on how to deal with people," she said.

"I think all businesses need to go to it, especially if they have younger employees.

"Customer service, I don't think, is taught as much as it should be in training classes with a lot of these businesses - if they don't have good customer service, they don't have good business."

Conn Hutzell is a shift leader at Little Caesar's pizza in Cabot. He and five other employees attended the workshop.



"It was nice to bounce ideas back and forth across each other in that type of environment," he said.

"It's a good affirmation of things we'd heard before, hearing others in

the community talk about the same things."

Hutzell said the business has a lot of younger workers.

"A lot of them, this is their first honest to goodness job, the first time they've had responsibility."

"It became reality to them sitting in that kind of setting - it gave them a little bit of a boost knowing they were entrusted enough to go to the seminar and learn things that are going to help them and us," he said.

"I'm sure it will be the topic of conversation around here for quite a while."