

# business solutions

MARCH 2015 • VOLUME 2 • ISSUE 1



## Round After Round of Excellence at The Topeka Country Club



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*Business Solutions* is a publication of  
Blue Valley Tele-Communications  
1559 Pony Express Highway,  
Home, KS 66438

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Postmaster send changes to:  
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Home, KS 66438



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**Creating an emotional bond with customers may sound touchy-feely.** But it can mean the difference between a one-time transaction and an ongoing relationship. In this issue of *Business Solutions*, we look at different ways to make customers comfortable—and encourage their loyalty.

On page 3, you'll read about **Going Beyond Customer Service**. Customers can mention different aspects of your business to describe why they like it, but the truth is that how they feel about doing business with you—also known as their customer experience—is what keeps them coming back.

Our Business Spotlight shines on **The Topeka Country Club** on pages 4 and 5. With a long and successful history, the club knows a little something about keeping members happy. They do it with top-notch facilities designed by world-class architects, and, perhaps even more importantly, exceptional service.

Then, on page 6, learn about **Blue Valley's "About Us" Page**. Because we believe that a personal connection builds trust, we wanted to let you get to know us. You can read about every Blue Valley Tele-Communications (BVTC)/Networks Plus employee on our expanded About Us page, and visit the rest of our improved website while you're there.

Of course, BVTC wants to practice what we preach, so please let us know any time how we can improve our connection with you and your business!

Sincerely,

Brian Thomason  
General Manager/CEO  
Blue Valley Tele-Communications



# Going Beyond Customer Service

*Build loyalty by providing a great customer experience*



**W**hat is it about your company that makes customers want to do business with you, and even tell others about it? Is it your fantastic products? Great selection? Impressive expertise? It's probably all of these things to some degree. But, to an even greater extent, it's how they feel about doing business with you, or what is known as their customer experience.

## **Improve Customer Experience, Improve Business**

A study by RightNow Technologies found, "Customer service is the most influential thing a company can do to increase customer advocacy." The study revealed that 55 percent of consumers recommend a company because of its customer service, compared to products at 49 percent and price at 42 percent. In addition, customers are willing to pay more for a great customer experience—up to 25 percent more!

Incredibly, according to a MarketingCharts.com article about the study, "RightNow estimates the U.S. airline industry could make an additional \$10.6 billion in revenue this year if they could guarantee a superior customer experience. That is more than five times the predicted deficit for the airline industry this year." Just imagine what your company could accomplish with additional attention to customer experience.

## **Emotional Bonds are Hard to Break**

Customer experience is a somewhat new concept in business. Wikipedia defines it as follows: "The sum of all experiences a customer has with a supplier ... awareness, discovery, attraction, interaction, purchase, use, cultivation and advocacy." With each

of these stages in the relationship, there are many opportunities to provide an excellent customer experience.

The key to doing so is identifying what emotions customers want to feel when doing business with you, then creating situations that enable it to happen. Examples of positive customer emotions include joy, trust, contentment, and the feeling of "being taken care of." The cumulative emotions customers experience as they do business with you result in an emotional bond that becomes hard to break over time.

Practices that can instantly improve your customers' experience include making them feel valued, listening carefully to their concerns, and overdelivering.

## **Benefits of a Customer Focus**

You may be concerned that improving customer experience will cost you more in staffing, marketing, and training; however, such improvements can actually help your bottom line in these ways:

- **Customer loyalty.** It costs less to retain current customers than to attract new ones.
- **Additional income.** Happy customers are willing to pay more for your products or services.
- **Word of mouth.** Customers who love doing business with you will tell others about you.

Remember, it's not only what your customers think about your company, but also what they feel about it, that matters. Customer experience is at the heart of it all.



# The Topeka Country Club

*Providing a luxurious and relaxing home away from home*

Members of The Topeka Country Club appreciate having a home away from home where they can relax, golf, play tennis, swim, dine and connect with friends or colleagues. The club, which has been in operation since 1905, includes a beautifully maintained 18-hole golf course.

## A Distinguished History

The first nine holes of the course were designed by Thomas M. Bendelow in 1906, and the 2,900-yard-long course was immediately acclaimed by the club members. The second nine holes were designed by Perry Maxwell, who is considered one of the best golf course architects of the 20th century. The course is open year round, weather permitting. The club also includes three indoor and four outdoor tennis courts, a pool, and facilities for weddings and other functions.

President and COO Clay Meininger notes, “The club has been visited by many famous people over the years including President William Howard Taft, Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Ben Hogan, and golfers Jack Nicholas and Tom Watson who played an 18-hole match here.”

## Serving Members and the Community

The event facilities include six private banquet rooms up to 7,000 square feet. These rooms can seat up to 400 dinner guests or

accommodate a reception of 500 people. Meininger remarks, “We pride ourselves in offering a beautiful venue for wedding receptions, corporate meetings, and formal and informal affairs.”

The club has 455 household memberships, amounting to over 1,200 members. Meininger says, “Of the 455 memberships, 370 use the golf course. Members appreciate that the course is so well maintained by our superintendent, who has been with the club for 35 years, and his staff.”

During warmer months, the staff increases in size from about 70 to about 130. They prepare and serve food and drinks; offer golf, tennis, and swimming instruction; and help members with the various activities.

The club’s PGA golf professional staff has been honored twice as the Section PGA Junior Golf Leader. This staff offers state-of-the-art teaching with video analysis and replay, along with the ability to email lessons and notes from the tee. Options include

private lessons, group clinics, short-game clinics, and driver camps. In addition, the golf shop plans and facilitates many golf events for membership, including member-member, member-guest, ladies' day, men's day, league play, and junior.

**The club offers a wide variety of additional activities for members including the following events:**

- Cooking classes including one on Pacific Northwest style
- Sunday brunch
- Family-style fried chicken nights
- Zumba classes
- Kids' nights out
- Breakfast with Santa and gingerbread house making
- Junior golf
- Junior tennis
- Swim team and swim lessons

For the past two years, the club has been collecting historical photos from members to add to the clubhouse artwork. Meininger comments, "Our staff provides exceptional service to all our members, and our members feel well taken care of."

***The service we provide to The Topeka Country Club is a great example of how BVTC/Networks Plus can effectively manage all of a company's IT needs."***

— RICHARD LINCOLN, BVTC/NETWORKS PLUS BUSINESS ACCOUNT CONSULTANT

The community benefits from the club's presence as well. Meininger explains: "We're very involved with the Kansas Golf Association, the Topeka Golf Association, and Washburn University. Last year we donated to over 30 local organizations. We've helped with fundraising for the zoo and the Topeka Civic Theater, and have been involved with the local Chamber of Commerce."

### Technology Behind the Scenes

To stay on top of the technology component of the business, The Topeka Country Club uses FIT Remote Managed Services from BVTC/Networks Plus. Richard Lincoln, BVTC/Networks Plus Business Account Consultant, says, "Essentially, we're their IT guy. They pay a monthly service fee and we monitor their equipment 24/7. We also do regular maintenance so we can catch issues even before anyone at the club knows about them. The service is remote unless we need to install something physical, like a new server."

Meininger has been pleased with the service. He comments, "They check in every month to see how things are running, and they're there when we need them." Lincoln adds, "The service we provide to The Topeka Country Club is a great example of how BVTC/Networks Plus can effectively manage all of a company's IT needs."

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*BVTC/Networks Plus Senior Technician, Brian Jones, works on a customer's network to resolve server issues.*





## Updated website provides useful content and improved functionality

If you've visited the BVTC website recently, you probably noticed some changes. The site transformation took place over a period of several weeks, and by November 18, 2014, all the new content was live. BVTC Marketing Associate Rachel Strunk explains the need for the change: "We found that viewers had to click too many times to get the information they wanted. For example, finding TV channel lineups required wading through page after page. We knew for some time that we needed a change, and our recent acquisition of Networks Plus made it the perfect time to update."

The entire process—from planning to going live—took just three months. The biggest differences, notes Strunk, are, "The site flows much better now and has updated functionality. It's also more responsive, meaning it will adapt to whatever device the viewer is using including computers, phones, and tablets. This makes it more user friendly for anyone who wants to visit us online."

Visitors to the updated About Us page will see that it's actually a whole section that includes helpful facts such as the company's mission statement, fun bios of every staff member, and information about the board of directors, scholarships, employment opportunities, and more.

As the most-hit page on any website and one that builds credibility, Strunk and the marketing team knew the About Us page needed to be very strong. Strunk says, "We went for a friendly, approachable tone. We wanted readers to get a good understanding of what customers can expect from us. Finally, we wanted them to feel like they can really get to know our people."

Visit our About Us page at <http://bluevalley.net/about>.

## TIPS FOR MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR "ABOUT US" PAGE

After visitors see your home page, their first question is often, "Who are you, anyway?" That's when they look for the About Us page. Make the most of yours by following these tips:

**Cover the basics.** At the very least, your About Us page should contain a listing of products and/or services, information about what types of customers you serve, and how long you have been in business.

**Tell your history.** You want to consider items like the inspiration for your company, its accomplishments, and how you plan to grow.

**Get personal.** Personal information about your employees may be appropriate, particularly if their interests and hobbies relate in some way to your business. For example, if you own a pet grooming business, including the names and photos of your employees' pets might be a nice touch.

**Get philosophical.** Incorporate some of your mission statement (perhaps revised to make it more relatable) or business philosophy into the page.





# Stand Up for Health and Productivity

*Sitting less during the workday can result in significant benefits*

“Sit down and get to work.” You probably remember teachers saying that during your school years. But was it the best advice? Some research suggests that long periods of constant sitting inhibit circulation and flexibility, and decrease attentiveness. A recent study from Pennington Biomedical Research Center at Louisiana State University says that by reducing excessive sitting to less than three hours a day, a person can add an estimated two years to his or her life expectancy.

This information has led more companies to offer employees the option of working at a stand-up desk. The idea isn't new; history features many prominent stand-up desk users including Thomas Jefferson, Ernest Hemingway, and Winston Churchill. However, the trend is catching on as more people experience the health and productivity benefits of working while standing.

Even if you don't want to invest in stand-up desks at your company, there are other ways to incorporate more standing into the workday:

- **Stand up while talking on the phone.** Doing so helps many people stay alert and adds energy to their voices—particularly useful during sales calls.
- **Have stand-up meetings.** It's almost guaranteed that these meetings will take less time; when standing, people tend to get to the point more quickly.
- **Take regular activity breaks.** It can be as simple as a five-minute walk around the hallway or a few trips up and down the stairs.

The bottom line (pun intended) is this: Employees who are more sedentary have been found to be less productive. Is it time for your company to stand up and take notice?

## BVTC ENCOURAGES EMPLOYEES TO BE ACTIVE

The annual Walk Kansas campaign seeks to spread the message that walking 30 minutes a day, five days a week can improve overall health and prevent disease.

BVTC employees will participate in the campaign, which takes place March 15 to May 9. The BVTC group will likely have two teams of six people each.



The decision to participate was based on motivating employees to get active. BVTC Marketing Associate Rachel Strunk says, “We wanted people to be aware of how sitting at a desk all day affects overall health. Plus, it's a great way to show support of our local county extension offices.”

While Walk Kansas is a statewide program, each county has its own implementation. Contact your local extension office for further details on how to participate in your county.

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