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**Takash empowers business leaders with service insights
Robert Morris College sponsors, Bensenville Chamber hosts
keynote**

Bensenville, Illinois—Your ability to make a positive difference in others' lives is directly related to your willingness to be vulnerable.

That message was at the heart of a recent keynote talk by Joe Takash, a nationally renowned leadership consultant who addressed nearly 200 business and community leaders at Monty's Banquets, 703 S. York Road in Bensenville.

On December 6, Robert Morris College sponsored and the Bensenville Chamber of Commerce hosted the interactive luncheon program, "The Five Keys To Service Excellence."

In his nearly one-hour presentation, Takash blended humor with practical tips encompassing effective business principles and overall human-relations skills. He also got audience members on their feet.....participants
Among the insights he communicated:

Vulnerability is a strength, not a weakness.

Admitting that you don't recall somebody's name is one example of making yourself vulnerable, but ultimately empowers you, said Takash.

He offered tips on remembering names, such as developing associations with a given person's name, writing it down, and saying it at least three times in your initial conversation—of course, not in rapid-fire fashion.

Whatever approach works for you, the results are powerful, he said, because knowing someone's name—and using it with sincerity and warmth—is a doorway to great human, and business, relations.

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Uttering a phrase so significant that he directed the audience to repeat it after him, Takash declared, “Names mean money in business.”

Treat People Like They Are Superstars

To underscore his superstar-treatment point, Takash shared the story of a recent, exhausting road trip that he took with his family, and the warm, personal attention they received from a hotel in Pennsylvania.

The service, which included the staff using his family members’ names, was so good that he considered moving his family into the hotel for awhile, Takash jested.

“Hampton Inn gets a 200-person plug because of their service,” he remarked.

Solicit Constructive Feedback

In sales, conventional wisdom is to focus on “ABC,” or “Always Be Closing.” While that approach has its merits, Takash said “ABO”—or “Always Be Opening”—was of even greater import.

“What kind of first impression do you make to other people?” he asked.

Some 97 percent of unhappy customers never say anything directly to the individual or business entity that has a stake in knowing about that unhappiness, said Takash. So it’s crucial that you seek input from others to detect your “blind spots.”

Takash cited a survey in which 93 percent of business leaders indicated they are effective communicators, but only 11 percent of their employees agreed with that assessment.

“That’s an 82-percent perception misalignment,” said Takash. “The key is to solicit feedback.”

Watch Your Tone of Voice

Takash posed this intriguing question to the audience: of these four tones of voice—sarcastic, abrupt, arrogant and condescending—which one is most often cited as the most offensive?

“Condescending” was the overwhelming reply, and accurately so. However, we all need to be mindful of the tone of voice we use with others, Takash cautioned.

SHEE is the Key

S is for “smile,” H is for “handshake,” the first E is for “eye contact” and the second E is for “enthusiasm,” which elevates the impact of the first three elements, Takash said.

He guided the audience through a series of hilarious role-play exercises that cemented the importance of a sincere smile, a firm—but not crushing—handshake, and warm, direct eye contact. Capping it all is enthusiasm.

“Enthusiasm is a choice,” said Takash. “It’s not about a Happy Meal, or doing a back-flip. Be an initiator. Do I play not to lose or do I play to win?”

Value What Other People Value

Our natural tendency is to be self-centered, but it’s vital that we genuinely seek to turn the spotlight on others, Takash said.

Some business-related questions that help spark conversations include “what are you most proud of at your company?” and “what are your biggest challenges?”

But it’s essential, too, to go beyond strictly business, Takash said. A simple question that can build extraordinary rapport: “What are you passionate about outside of your work?”

“Talk to a person about themselves and they will listen for hours,” Takash noted.

Takash is president of Victory Consulting, a performance management firm with a client list that includes Fortune 100 companies and many other industry leaders.

Since 1988, he has delivered more than 3,000 speaking programs throughout the country, working alongside such recognizable names as Zig Ziglar and Earvin “Magic” Johnson.

Takash’s keynote presentations for company sales meetings and national conferences focus on improving employee morale, enhancing team performance and increasing company profit. To learn more about Takash, visit www.joetakash.com.