

Caring gestures can bring rewards

LAST week I was delighted to take a call from the MYOB Awesome Service team in Auckland telling me a Tauranga business had won the national competition for the week.

The MYOB Awesome Service Awards exist to celebrate excellent service from New Zealand businesses. Another way of looking at it is to think of them as the polar opposite of *Fair Go*.

Treana Griffin, who runs Zeeegles, an online specialist children's clothing mail order company, is the latest winner of the MYOB Awesome Service Award. She was nominated by an Auckland customer who wanted an item of clothing her special-needs 3-year-old son couldn't take off easily.

The customer made the on-line order and says Treana responded quickly and the overalls arrived speedily, with an unexpected bonus. Ms Griffin had added another \$40 pair of overalls free, with a simple note saying: "Please accept this complimentary pair for your son."

The nominator said "the generosity of this business to a total stranger was amazing and of great encouragement to me".

Apart from a big public pat on the back, Ms Griffin received a Michael Hill gift card, framed citation and Tauranga Chamber of Commerce membership for a year.

For me, the big message we can all take from Treana's win is the value of going the extra mile when establishing a relationship with a customer. At a time when many businesses are cutting costs, here we find a business increasing its spend on building relationships.



GROWING BUSINESS MAX MASON

And look at the result — a satisfied customer is spreading the word, which has resulted in national media exposure. If ever there was a good example of the adage 'What comes around, goes around' this is it.

Plenty of businesses in the Western Bay offer excellent service, and they also deserve the recognition that Ms Griffin and her fellow winners have enjoyed.

We should all make a point of going the extra mile in supporting them, so if you get inspirational customer service please nominate the person who provides it for an MYOB Awesome Service Award.

All you have to do is visit: www.awesomeservice.co.nz and tell them about the person you are nominating. It could be a business you deal with, or the plumber who got up on your roof in the middle of a storm to stop water pouring into your lounge.

It could be the retailer who searched high and low to get a particular product

you really wanted — the list goes on.

The person or the business you nominate may have gone out of their way to look after you once, or they may have loyally been providing you with awesome service for years. Each weekly winner will be rewarded with recognition of their win on Newstalk ZB, a framed MYOB Awesome Service Award winner's certificate, and a profile on the MYOB Awesome Service Awards website.

If it is located in the Western Bay of Plenty, free Chamber of Commerce membership will be a bonus.

Although the awards have been available in Auckland and other bigger centres for more than a year, the Bay of Plenty and Waikato chambers of commerce have only recently been invited to participate — and a Tauranga business has won.

On the Awesome Service website, about 60 winners are listed and their profiles offer a fascinating smorgasbord of ways to delight customers.

If you are involved in a business that depends on attracting new customers through word of mouth, and on retaining existing customers through good service, you should have a look at this website. Not only will you pick up plenty of useful tips but you'll gain enough inspiration to take on the world.

Max Mason is chief executive of Tauranga Chamber of Commerce, which provides networking and support services for local businesses. He can be contacted on email: max@tauranga.org.nz or phone (07) 577 9823.