

# Sightings

A Publication of

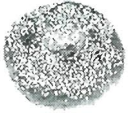


The Longview Group

INSIGHTS...IN SIGHT

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The Longview Group will conduct several full-day seminars in February 2005.

Look for:

**Practical Project Management for Smaller Firms** in the Greater Chicago area and downstate Illinois.

**Sales and Marketing 101** will be in Billings, Montana, Greater Chicago, and downstate Illinois.

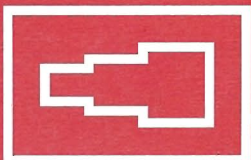
Dates and locations will be announced soon.

**Start 2005 off with a comprehensive strategic plan. Contact us.**

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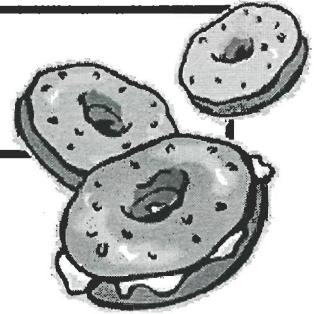
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INSIGHTS...IN SIGHT

## Holes in the Bagel



Survival in any highly competitive marketplace requires: a great product, exceptional service and wholesome relationships. Think of it as a three-legged stool upon which your business thrives. Without all three the business base teeters, wobbles and perhaps breaks apart.



### Bagel Bakery

There is a franchised bagel bakery not far from my house. For years I frequented the place three or four mornings per week for coffee and bagels smeared with cream cheese. Each cream cheese sandwich included a flavored bagel (my favorite was asiago) lopped with a measured scooped of cream cheese (olive-pimento). The franchiser probably paid a fortune to some food engineer. They figured out just the right amount of cream cheese for the bagel sandwich. Not too much. Not too little. Just right. The place has great coffee too. It is NOT inexpensive, but the product WAS good. One solid leg on the three-legged stool.

### A Keeper

Many times each month, I would purchase a couple dozen bagels and several tubs cream cheese and take them to clients or associates.

If I had me as a customer, I would qualify as "a keeper."

They had me as a frequent repeat customer. I would use the term "bread and butter customer," but that does not exactly fit when discussing bagels.

### Saw One Leg Off

The staff at the bakery could hardly be considered consummate. To be honest, few of them worked there long enough to see my face that often. Many had a persistent case of a psychological rash. You know. Their personality seemed terminally scratched. Most of them belonged in the back by the boiling-water kettle and oven, instead of behind the counter trying to deal with people who had not had their morning coffee. I seldom got a greeting from them, even after meeting them several times a week for several weeks. Maybe it was me.

**We could have had a relationship. Actually I tried. It was obvious they were not hired nor trained to be goodwill ambassadors.**

Often the store manager was behind the counter. This employee knew I was a frequent customer. But many times, she would look me directly in the eye and never say a word. No greeting. ZILCH. I guess she was modeling behavior for her staff. They sure learned it. *Cut one leg of the stool off.*



### A Little Sanitation Issue

There were some other things I overlooked, but did not forget. Many failed to wash their hands after making change in the cash register. Even when a box of plastic gloves appeared behind the counter, they were not consistently used. I don't typically fret about a little sanitation issue.

### Cut It Off, Cut It Off...

Sometimes when I asked for a couple dozen bagels to go, the help would bark, "You gotta call us in advance with those big orders. We won't have inventory to sell to others." Mea copa. *Cut another leg of the stool in half.*

One day, they stopped using the scoops to measure the cream cheese. The employees took a spatula and laid a paper thin coating of cream cheese between the bagel halves. Damn the food engineers. Damn the franchiser. Damn the product quality. I complained.

I talked to the manager. She said, "if they don't put enough cream cheese on, ask for more." (Now I was both customer and quality control officer for the operation.) Nothing happened. I complained to the regional person. Nothing happened. I complained on the franchiser's "Let Us Hear From You" section of the web site. NADA.

### Non-singing Oliver

Remember the musical, *Oliver*? At breakfast one day, Oliver, a four-year old new resident at an orphanage, is so bold as to ask for more gruel. The line is, "may I have some more sir." That was me. An old, short, fat, gray, non-singing Oliver.



One day after asking for "MORE" cream cheese, they charged me an extra 40 cents. That did it! I stopped going there. The three-legged stool imploded.

**To be successful in today's crowded marketplace, you need a great product, great service, and great relationships.**

I contacted the national organization and told them I was writing this article. The statewide franchisor called me almost immediately to find out what was wrong. The stool was legless. Too little. Too late.

### A Fine New Place

A friend told me they are back using the scoops. Could be. Who knows? I found another bakery. It is much less convenient. They have very good coffee. They have kind and smiling staff who seem sincerely interested in keeping me as a customer. They have just fair bagels. I like the new place a lot more.



Look at this fine new stool.

## WHAT IS THE LONGVIEW GROUP?

Seeking more efficiency and effectiveness in your professional service business? The Longview Group provides you INSIGHTS through training, on-the-job coaching, expert counsel, and extra-hands services. We provide strategic planning services, market research, and image/reputation studies.



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