

Care for your Customers

Louis Copeland is a household name. His name is synonymous with good suits. He has also mastered the art of bi-location because no matter when you go into his shop on Capel St he is always there.

He is the king of customer care

LOUIS COPELAND

Louis Copeland doesn't claim to have all the answers but the basic principles of good business practice he believes remain the same in good times and in bad. He is emphatic that there is no better remedy to a recession than "getting up early and working your backside off on the shop floor." Louis has worked with suits all his life and knows that business is not about what suits him, but what suits the customer. So just what are the 'suits' saying this season?

"They're all saying, it's tough, it's down. Even solicitors who traditionally were always like it was no tomorrow, upbeat, always very busy, now they're even talking negative as well. The small builders, four years ago if you asked them they'd have about a year and a half's work on, but now they've got maybe three months on, and maybe by then they'll have other work on but it's the fear that they won't." And it's the fear factor that Louis believes is fuelling the recession right now.

"I'd say the biggest impact of the current economic situation is fear. People are sitting down listening to the news and reading the papers and talking themselves into a worse recession than there really is out there and it's just a lack of confidence. It's a bit like if you talk about it long enough you'll make yourself believe that it's worse than it actually is." But good old fashioned customer care

is still the key to survival and success.

"Number one, my most important thing is to look after the customer, give him service and I hope that even when things were good I didn't become complacent and I think the strong people will survive because they've been doing that all along. It's no good just to turn around because it's getting quiet and all of a sudden you start giving great service, we should be doing that all along."

Like others with his business experience Louis is not slow to admit that as a society we had lost the run of ourselves a bit and now that's starting to bite too.

"I think we had got a bit complacent. I would be dealing over the years with youngish people going into these jobs and you'd be saying to them: 'How are things' and they'd be saying to you 'I'm very stressed, very busy. I'm finding it hard to cope I'm so busy.' My advice to them all the time has been that the stress of being very busy is better than the stress of being very quiet.

"Our expectations are high, we've had it too good over the last ten years. Now, you've got to think twice (about a purchase). In the 80's but we didn't know any better. We were working hand to mouth and we didn't have the benefit and big splurge of the boom. People now have a spare car in the house, new clothes whenever they wanted. Before (in the early 80's) a fella probably had two ties, a navy and a red one. In the good years people were just buying ties and maybe if they didn't like them they just threw them out."

FACT FILE

NAME: Louis Copeland

BACKGROUND PROFILE: Now one of the country's most prestigious tailors the business was established in the mid-50's by Louis Copeland snr at their premises on Capel St. Renowned for their quality, range and customer service the company now has seven outlets operated by Louis Copeland and his brother Adrian. They employ a staff of over 70.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS: Every customer is treated like a king. Despite cut price and cut throat competition Louis Copeland remains a by-word for quality and has suited presidents, sports stars and even James Bond. Among their clients have been Kevin Spacey, Pierce Brosnan, Brendan Gleeson, Robbie Keane, Ken Doherty, Tom Jones, Van Morrison, Bertie Ahern and Bill Clinton.

Top 5 Survival Tactics

- 1 Stay out of the office, get close to your customers
- 2 Stay at the coalface and keep your customers happy
- 3 Being negative doesn't help anyone
- 4 Learn from your mistakes, don't be cocky
- 5 Cut your cloth according to your means. Don't be complacent



I think you have to go looking for opportunities but

when there's a downturn there's always opportunity