

## Clients – Developing Long Term Relationships

Snowsports instruction is about people, precious and valuable people. A very important and larger part of both group and private snowsports instruction is developing relationships with your clients. Often they become friends for life and as their children grow up, you then end up skiing with their grandchildren. You eat dinner with them, meet for breakfast, go shopping and even off season, visit them, or they come visit you. You will go to birthdays, to anniversaries, to graduations... you will be friends.

Of course, this doesn't always happen and sometimes, if they never come back to your resort, you don't see them again, but even then, you might become Facebook or Instagram "friends" and stay connected.

In the ski instructor world, we have often used the word "connection" - It's about connecting with other people. What is connection? (If you believe in Jesus, it's a spiritual connection that will last into eternity and that is pretty exciting!) What helps make connections?

One important factor to understand is that working as a snowsports instructor is not about you. It's about other people. You need to be accepting of yourself at least to the extent that you are not your main concern. Your focus, your interest, your concern, your curiosity is other people. It's not about you, it's about them.

People come to a mountain for various reasons and with various objectives. Often, they come with a dream of a fabulous snowy vacation. Your job is to help make that dream a reality for them. Of course, sometimes you get the young teenager who was coerced on the vacation by his folks, when he'd rather be home with his friends. Still your job is to make it as fun for him as you can and help the parents by understanding and not having them worry. When working with all children, your job as an instructor is a bit more complicated – connection with both parents and children! (Smiling) and sometimes you might find yourself more as a marriage counselor, too... It's all good... *just don't become the know-it-all who has an answer for everything. "I don't know" is a very valid response!*

You will do many things with a client in addition to learning about skiing. Sometimes, learning will never even become an objective at all during your time with the client. Regardless learning of some sort always occurs. *We are created to be lifelong learners.* Even when you consider your role as an instructor, a "teacher", you are better off if you drop the "teacher/one who knows" mindset and consider yourself a helper – one who serves the client and helps them learn. Considering yourself a facilitator of learning is more real concept than considering yourself a "teacher". A teacher tells and that's not really your job. Your job is to help someone learn and learning is most often accomplished by listening to the client and encouraging them to experiment and play, to actually ski. People often learn when they process by talking and doing, not by being told something.

Sometimes, your job will be to carry skis or pick the best place to eat lunch or even advice for after skiing. During the day, you watch out for them; you don't let them get sunburned, hungry, too cold, too tired, and hopefully not hurt. You make sure their equipment fits – boots, skis and helmet. Often you might need to suggest changes for them. You pay attention to everything that will help them have a good time and meet their expectations.

The best way to fulfill the client's expectations is to ask them and then listen and then do whatever you can to make them happy while still keeping to what you know is right and true. Listening and smiling are your two biggest assets. Just remember, it's not about you, it's about other people. If you have a respect for and even a love for other people, you will want to get to know them and to help them.

If you will go the extra mile, you will develop a client base that last for years and even through generations.

*There are those of us who believe that God created us to be learners and to love and get along with others. With Jesus as Lord, that works quite well. So, also pray and get the extra help from the Lord!*