As an author and a professional speaker, I travel all over the world and speak to groups about one of my favorite topics, building customer loyalty. A few years ago I was leading a customer service session for a large supermarket chain where I had the opportunity to speak to a crowd of 3,000 frontline service people—truck drivers, cashiers, baggers, produce people, stockers, floral specialists, bakers, and others.
During the course of my presentation, I said, “Every one of you can make a difference and create meaningful memories for your customers that will motivate them to come back. How?

**Put your personal signature on the job.**

Go home tonight and think about something you can do for your customers to make them feel special—a memory that will make them want to come back and shop at your store again.”
I then directed the audience’s attention to one of my personal signatures: the nearly one hundred bright-colored, handmade posters lining the walls, printed with all kinds of quotations.

Whether I’m speaking to thirty or three thousand people, I always line the walls of the room or ballroom with these posters, because they change the feeling in the room by adding color, inspiration, and fun. They take a lot of extra time to put up and they’re bulky to lug around the country. But they make me stand out as a speaker and provide a wonderful memory for audiences, so it is well worth the extra effort.
There are lots of ways you can give your own personal signature to your work. For example, I know a baggage attendant who decided that his personal signature would be to collect all the luggage tags that fell off customers' suitcases. In the past, the tags had been simply tossed into the garbage. The attendant decided that in his free time he would send the tags back to their owners with a note saying,

"Thank you for flying with us."
I met a graphic artist who always encloses a piece of sugarless gum in everything he sends his customers, so they never throw away anything from him. I heard of a senior manager who uses stickers and Kleenex as his personal signature. When the news is something he knows they won't like very much, he staples a piece of Kleenex to the corner of the memo.
I always leave my telephone number and e-mail address with audiences, encouraging them to call me if they have questions or want to share a success story they experienced by adding a personal signature to their work. About a month after I had spoken to the supermarket folks, I received a call from a frontline customer contact person, a nineteen-year-old bagger named Johnny.

The caller, who proudly informed me that he was a Down syndrome youngster, told me his story.
“Barbara, I liked what you talked about” Johnny said excitedly.
“but I didn’t think I could do anything special for our customers.

After all, I’m just a bagger.

Then I had an idea.” He decided that every night when he came home from work, he would find a thought for the day. “If I can’t find a saying I like.” Johnny said proudly, “I think one up!”
When Johnny had a good saying, his dad helped him enter his “Thought for the Day” six times on a page in the computer. Every night they printed out fifty pages. Johnny cut out each quote and signed his name on the back of every one of them. “Then I put them in a paper bag I keep beside me at work,” he continued. “When I finish bagging someone’s groceries, I put my thought for the day in their bag and say, ‘Thanks for shopping with us.’”

It touched me to think that this young man—with a job that most people would say is not important—had made it important by creating precious memories for all his customers.
A month later the store manager called me. He said, "Barbara, you won’t believe what happened today. When I was making my rounds and got up front where the cashiers are, I found the line at Johnny’s checkout was three times longer than anyone else’s! It went all the way down the frozen food aisle. I was concerned, so I announced, ‘Get more cashiers out here; get more lanes open!’ all the while trying to get people to change lanes. But no one would move. They all said, ‘No, it’s okay—we want to be in Johnny’s lane—we want his ‘Thought for the Day.’’"
The store manager continued. "It was a joy to watch Johnny delight the customers. I got a lump in my throat when one woman came up and grabbed my hand and said, 'I used to shop at your store only once a week, but now I come in every time I go by, because I want to get Johnny's Thought for the Day.'"

"I imagine that helps the bottom line," I said to the manager.

"You bet!" he replied.
"Who do you think is the most important person in our whole store now?"

"Johnny, of course!"
A few months later, the store manager called me again. “Barbara,” he said, “Johnny has transformed our store. Now when the floral department has a broken flower or an unused corsage, they go out on the floor and find an elderly woman or a little girl and pin it on them.”
"One of our butchers loves Snoopy. He bought thousands of Snoopy stickers and each time he wraps a piece of meat, he puts a sticker on it. All of our cashiers now have their own personal signature. Everyone's having a lot of fun creating memories. Our customers are talking about us...in a good way, coming back, and bringing their friends."
What a wonderful spirit of service spread throughout that store—and all, because of one young man with Down syndrome who decided he could make a difference! As I tell my audiences, "Every one of us in this room can make a difference. We can all be a Johnny."

And with tears in nearly every eye, they agree.