

**Retailer Newsletter**

**January 1, 2024**

**Tom’s Business “TIPS”**

***“To Improve Profits”***

**RE: Make 2024 Your Year!**

**Happy New Year!**

**If your results for 2023 were not what you hoped, I suggest you act now and do something to make it better in 2024! When I was in business, there were many times that my results were not what I wanted them to be, so I made a change. I won’t tell you that my changes were correct the first time either, but I kept at it until I found success. None of us have a genie sitting on our shoulders telling us what we should do or what we should not do. I wish we had, but we don’t. When you look at yourself in the mirror each day, ask yourself, “Am I going in the right direction?” *or* “Am I satisfied with the results today?” If your answer is “No” or “Not yet”, do something different today. For those of you who have a genie sitting on your shoulder, please tell me where you got it so that I can share it with others.**

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**At a recent presentation in a location I have been many times in the past, I had a conversation with a store manager, whom I recognized from previous classes. When I asked if her owner had attended any of the training classes, she looked at me and said, “Oh no, he doesn’t need to be here, he knows all this stuff!” I held back on my reply for a moment, and then I finally said, “Really?” She said, “He’s been in business many years and doesn’t need any help.” It was obvious that nothing I could say would change her mind (or his for that matter), so I dropped it. Here’s my take on that discussion; I spent 30+ years as an Amoco/BP retailer and 8 years before that working at various jobs and locations for Amoco Oil Co. I attended every training session I could make it to up until the day I left the retail business. I can honestly say, without a doubt, during any training session I attended, I left with some knowledge I did not have before the class. Now I may not have learned anything new from the facilitator, but there were times it reinforced something I learned in the past and for some unexplained reason did not follow through. There were also times when I heard something that I had previously done, and for some unknown reason, I quit doing it. It may surprise you to learn that there were many times I learned more from one of the other attendees in the class during lunch, a coffee break, or when someone challenged the facilitator to some of the facts presented. I always try to include a Q&A session after our training sessions just for that reason. That has been an issue when doing a Zoom or Teams meeting. There is no opportunity for interaction between fellow retailers, and some faced the same problem I was having in my business. Now I do realize that there is a time when internet training is suitable, but nothing takes the place of in-person training where dialogue can be achieved during the back-and-forth discussion.**

**My oldest son became a registered nurse (BSN) late in his life (almost 50 years old), and I learned from him that nurses are required to renew their licenses every 2-4 years (depending on the state). The simple reason for this is things change in the medical field, and nurses must keep up with the times. When I owned my stores, most of my mechanics were ASE (Automotive Service Excellence) certified. They too had to renew their certification every 5 years. Same reason, the industry changes, and technicians need to stay current. I’m sure other people must re-certify their status in their profession, so doesn’t it make sense that retailers in a fast-changing retail business also do the same? So, the next time your marketer or retail organization offers a class (whatever the topic) go with an open mind that you will learn something you did not know before attending. After the session promise yourself that you will return to your business with the same open mind and implement something you learned! On a personal note, that’s why all our training classes come with an ‘Action Plan’. After the completion of each topic during our class, we stop and ask participants to write down at least 3 items they think are important to implement. The Action Plan is our way of helping you make the vital change(s) at your store that you thought were important during the class. Click to view sample Action Plan:**

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**Sam Walton, founder of the mega business Walmart said this to a group of trainees:**

***“Believe me…the customer never comes back!”***

***“I’m the guy who goes to a restaurant, sits at a table, and waits patiently, while the server does everything but write down my order.***

***I’m the guy who goes to a store and waits quietly, while the salespeople finish their personal conversations, before taking my payment.***

***I’m the guy who drives into a gas station and never uses his horn but waits patiently for the employee to finish reading the newspaper. (Note: this was written in the day you drove into a gas station, drove over a hose, and the bell would ‘ding’ to alert the attendant that someone pulled in.)***

***I’m the guy who explains his desperate urgency for one item and doesn’t complain that he only gets it after three weeks of waiting.***

***I’m the guy who, when he enters a commercial establishment, seems to be asking for a favor, begging for a smile, or just hoping to be noticed.***

***You must be thinking I’m a quiet, patient, never troublesome type.***

***But don’t get fooled.***

***Do you know who I am? I am the customer who never returns!***

***I love seeing millions spent annually on all sorts of ads to get me back to your company. Because when I first went there, all they should have done was just show me a little, simple, and inexpensive kindness:***

***treat me with a little more courtesy.***

***There’s only one boss: THE CUSTOMER. And he can fire everyone in the company from the president to the janitor, simply by taking their money to spend elsewhere.”***

**Sam Walton understood that in any successful business, the customer must take priority. Now, I will assure you that Mr. Walton has been gone for several years and maybe his initial philosophy appears to have been forgotten at your local Walmart, but that’s how he started.**

**Many of you who know me and have attended a training session with me, or who are readers of Tom’s Tips for any length of time, realize that I have two passions about our business (1) providing *Great Customer Service* and (2) minimizing *employee/vendor theft*. I firmly believe that if retailers took those two principles and put more emphasis on them, they would be successful!**

**I’m going to ask a question that I often ask. “Why do many of the retailers I meet not understand the benefits of their staff wearing a uniform AND a name tag? The idea that so many do not boggles my mind. You must ask yourself, why do the big boys (QT, WaWa, Walmart, Target, and most grocery stores) see the benefit? It’s not because they want to spend extra money on their staff. They must realize that customers want to know who is waiting on them. Customers also appreciate the professionalism when seeing staff members dressed in a uniform with a name tag.**

**During the introduction portion of our in-person training, I ask if other stores in your vicinity are more successful (busier) than your store. This could be one of those small reasons your business is in decline. I am constantly asked this question when I meet retailers, “What is the one thing I can do to make my business successful?” My answer is always the same, “I don’t have that answer, but what I do have is lots of little things that will in fact add up!” Look at your staff and then look at yourself in the mirror and ask, “Why do I refuse to improve the image of my business?” Treat your staff with respect and they will treat your customers with respect!**

**You cannot turn on the TV or read a newspaper with seeing a story about shoplifting. Make certain that your staff understands your policy regarding shoplifting. Remember, shoplifting does not occur until the customer LEAVES the store. Even if an item is in the pocket of a customer, you cannot accuse them until they leave. A false accusation can be fatal to your business future.**

**If you would like to improve your store sales and profits, give me a call or email. If you are a supplier or organization with retailers, and they are struggling to maintain profitable stores, please reach out to me. We can help these stores operate more efficiently and improve profitability!**

***"Luck is a dividend of sweat.***

***The more you sweat, the luckier you get."***

***- Ray Kroc (former CEO of McDonald’s)***

**Don't be a victim of the 5 Dangerous Words –**

***‘Maybe I’ll Do It Tomorrow’***

**Do it today because tomorrow (~~could be~~) will be too late!**

Tom
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***“Our business is making your business better!”***