

**Retailer Newsletter**

**October 1, 2020**

**Tom’s Business “TIPS”**

***“To Improve Profits”***

**RE: How Much Does Great Customer Service *Really* Cost?**

**Hello,**

**As you might imagine, every time I get in the car and pass a c-store, I’m checking it out. What am I looking for? First, the posted price, are they busy, are the lights on at noon, is the lot clear of trash and weeds, grass mowed? Sometimes I smile and sometimes I just shake my head and say to myself, “They just don’t get it.” Let me share a few examples:**

**1. At one store, the CSR parks his car at the front door. I’m talking about the space closest to the entrance door. Common sense should tell you this spot is going to get lots and lots of door dings throughout the day, most importantly this convenient spot should be reserved for customers. All CSR’s and owners should park at the side of the lot, out of the way, saving the best spots for customers, we call that *‘Customer Convenient’*, *‘Customer Service.’***

**2. When working with a retailer in New Mexico and I noticed he parked his truck literally at the front door. He had parking curbs near the front door and his front bumper would actually hit front door if opened all the way. I asked him why he parked so close to the front door, making it inconvenient for his customers and his answer was, “Because it’s my store. I’ll park where I want to park.” Do you think he understood what customer convenience & customer service is all about? ☹**

**3. Another store I pass frequently has four fueling positions. The on-duty CSR always parks at one of them. I even stopped in one day and asked why they park at one fuel dispenser. The answer I was given was, “So customers will know we are open!” Really? You don’t think customers realize you are open, so you block 25% of your potential fueling spots.**

**4. I followed a CSR walking into the store after he finished a smoke break. I was shocked when that CSR made no attempt to hold the door for me, when I was 3-4’ behind him. That’s plain rude behavior when in public any time, not to mention an employee at your store.**

**You see, I think that’s poor Customer Service. Most people relate Customer Service to the way we communicate with our customers, I disagree, there’s lots of ways to communicate customer service, a few examples, having empty trash containers and usable squeegees at the islands, clean, well-stocked restrooms, fresh coffee and clean fountain area. It’s also the little things that most people don’t see or notice. I compare that to weeds growing in the curbs and sidewalks of your store. If you have a plan to eliminate weeds on a regular basis, nobody notices. However, if they grow untouched, customers suddenly look at that and think this is not a well-maintained business. If the Customer Service at your store is exceptional, customers are pleased and enjoy going there, and may not realize why, they just feel comfortable while shopping there.**

**Many times, our staff is young and inexperienced which requires us to monitor their behavior and provide them a good example, aka leadership! I’ve seen countless signs in store windows, “Help Wanted – Experience Required”. I want to scream and shout “Experience required in what; putting gas in your car, able to count change, clean restrooms, or what?” Maybe some of the experienced CSR’s bring some bad habits with them when they come to work for you. I believe it’s vital all CSR’s abide by the same rules YOU establish for YOUR business. If that means telling employees where to park their car, so be it. When I owned my stores and I was looking for new CSR’s, the main criteria I was looking for was a person who smiled and would look me in the eye. You see, I couldn’t teach someone to smile at my customers because that was not their nature. I could teach them how to operate the register, how to stock the cooler, make coffee, etc. but I couldn’t teach them to smile and look my customers in the eye. That’s something people do unconsciously.**

**If you operate multiple businesses and you trust your business to managers, they are responsible for staying on top of these situations. When you visit your stores, you are obligated to monitor the actions of your managers and staff while you are there.**

**I understand many retailers in various parts of the country are experiencing a coin shortage. With a little training I believe your CSR’s can alleviate the situation. If the purchase amount is $10.05 out of $20.00, your CSR should ask the customer if they have ANY change, before they hand 95¢ to the customer. I agree this takes a little more time and effort on their part, but it could help your coin problem. Another possibility is round up the change. Have a certain amount when your CSR rounds up the change. For example, if the purchase amount is $10.05 out of $20.00, and the customer does not have any change, simply round down and hand the customer $10.00 I don’t think it will cost you that much $$ in a day’s time. You might be surprised, customers will remember, “Oh last time I was in, I owed you 5¢ or 10¢” Give it a try.**

**I found this sign in a store room, I think we should share this with our staff often.**

**Our Customers Are Not**

**An Interruption Of Our**

**Work, But The Whole**

**Purpose of Our Efforts**

**Maybe it’s time to revisit my opening statement, “How Much Does Great Customer Service *Really* Cost?” The answer, not that much when you think about it! The benefits far outweigh the costs!! You noticed I said, ‘Great Customer Service’, you see I think the whole world is trying to give Good Customer Service and most businesses are doing a *mediocre job,* *at best*! That’s why we need to notch it up a bit and provide ‘Great Customer Service.’**

**I often hear grocery stores making an announcement, “Attention all associates, it’s time for the hourly cleaning of your areas.” I understand we don’t need to use the public address system, but maybe we should require our staff to clean:**

* **Front door handles**
* **Cooler door handles**
* **Coffee pot handles**
* **Restroom fixtures**
* **Countertops and counters**
* **Fuel nozzles/handles**

**I think customers will appreciate seeing your staff keeping the store clean and safe. I suggest designating 30 minutes after the hour (half past) as the designated time for these chores that should not interfere with shift change duties on the hour.**

**I hope you; your stores, staff, and family stay safe during these difficult times.**

**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!**

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