

**Retailer Newsletter**

**August 1, 2023**

**Tom’s Business “TIPS”**

***“To Improve Profits”***

**RE: Yes, I Did Trust My Staff!**

**Hope your summer is going well,**

1. **Interesting Telephone Call:**

**Last week I received a unique phone call that I want to share with you. The caller/retailer asked me if I thought all CSRs stole $$/merchandise from the stores where they work. She also asked if I had trusted any of my employees. I asked her why she was asking that, and she recalled my numerous *Tom’s Tips* articles about Employee Theft. I thought for a minute about how I might have given her that impression. I realize that I may have been rather harsh with my comments over the last few months regarding Employee Theft. My point in doing this was simply to direct your attention to one of the major reasons for the failures in our business. In my experience, I found employees who systematically steal $$ are often providing very poor customer service to your customers. Dishonest employees are too busy thinking about ways to continue stealing your hard-earned money; therefore, they don’t have the time or interest in providing great customer service. I have told every training class that I was tough on my staff, but I was also respectful of them. Meaning, my CSRs knew what I expected from them, and they knew what to expect from me. I frequently thanked them for showing up for work that day in complete uniform. Or I would buy lunch or dinner for the entire crew, for no specific reason.**

**If you have attended one of my training seminars, you have very likely heard me say that if you have 10 employees:**

* **2 will steal from you.**
* **2 will not steal from you.**
* **6 will steal from you if given the chance, and there is no fear of getting caught.**

**I was constantly ‘watching’ the 2 who will steal in an effort to let them know I was aware of what they are (could be) doing. It was a constant battle to overcome dishonest employees, but I felt my business survival was at stake. I also tried to keep an eye on the 6 ‘in the middle’, so they would not give into temptation and turn dishonest.**

**Remember and practice this phrase, *“Trust but Verify”* what your employees are doing. Let them know you are watching and checking.**

1. **Today’s World:**

**Now I’ll admit that in today’s world dealing with the problem of hiring and keeping good CSRs AND watching out for employee theft can be a full-time job in and of itself. I do believe that business owners who treat employees with respect probably do better than most regarding keeping good employees longer, AND that those employees will be less inclined to steal. Now it’s not an absolute truism but think about that for a minute. I have always believed that within minutes of walking into any business (retail or not), I can read the minds of the employees and truly know how they feel about their jobs and supervisors. Employees who feel respected and enjoy what they are doing are less likely to betray the owner by disrespecting customers and stealing $$ or merchandise.**

***Treat Your Staff Well and They Will Treat Your Customers Well!***

1. **Attracting Customers:**

**According to NACS Daily, *“59% of people went inside the C-store the last time they purchased gas.”* I read this as two-fold:**

**1*. How can you maximize the number of cars that pull into your driveway to buy fuel?***

1. **Stay competitive. Customers are not going to ‘consider’ pulling into the store if your fuel prices are significantly higher, compared to your competitors.**
2. **Have an attractive ‘curb appeal’. Just like when the real estate agent tells you to spruce up the appearance of your house beginning from the curb, you must be sure your store’s appearance is inviting and encouraging customers to *“drive in, not drive by.”***
3. **Be sure pump islands are clean, trash and litter-free, with squeegees and towels available.**
4. **Make sure the printers at the pumps are working properly with receipt paper. Don’t be foolish and think you will pressure customers to come inside the store to get their receipts and make a purchase. (Yes, I have met retailers who truly believe that inside store sales will increase if they ‘force’ customers to come inside to get a receipt. So sad!)**

**2. *How can you increase the number of customers entering your store after purchasing fuel?***

1. **Since you got your customers to make a fuel purchase, now you want to focus on attracting them to *‘walk in’* the store.**
2. **Be sure the store is well lit, with not too many signs blocking their view of the inside.**
3. **I have always been security-minded, and I do not feel comfortable walking into a business where I cannot see what is going on inside.**
4. **The inside must be bright and clean, including the front door, floor, and windows.**
5. **Do not force your customers to tiptoe over greasy, stained walkways to access your store.**
6. **Do not stack merchandise too high on shelves and gondolas. A good rule of thumb is nothing should be higher than 5’.**
7. **Have clean restrooms available. In our training sessions, I quote a statistic that says, “94% of your customers will not return if your restroom is dirty.” I always follow that up with, “If 94% will not return because you have dirty restrooms, what percentage will not return if you have NO restrooms available?” My personal survey says, “100% WILL NOT return!”**
8. **Encourage your staff to ‘Greet’ all customers as they enter the store. A simple, “Hi” or “Welcome” is adequate.**
9. **Be sure your staff does not give the impression that a customer coming into the store is an interruption of their phone conversation or texting.**
10. **Informative Articles:**
11. **I recently found an article titled "When Shots Are Fired’. It was written by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. I know that I have written about this in the past, but I feel this new story is worth reading. I have posted it on our website, ‘Safety & Security Hint’. Many of us have the attitude that things like this only happen to ‘the other guy’; but remember, to the other guy, you’re ‘the other guy’! Print this document and share it with your staff, family, and friends.**

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1. **Here is another online article I would like to pass it along to you.**

***The Food and Drug Administration issued warning letters to 189 retailers – including many convenience stores – for selling unauthorized tobacco products, specifically Elf Bar and Esco Bars. Both disposable e-cigarette brands come in flavors known to appeal to youth, like bubblegum and cotton candy, the FDA said.***

***The warning letters were the result of a nationwide retailer inspection blitz over the past several weeks cracking down on the sale of unauthorized e-cigarettes. On May 31, the agency announced it had issued warning letters to 29 retailers and one distributor for illegally selling unauthorized tobacco products from Puff and Hyde.***

* ***“The FDA is prepared to use all its authorities to ensure these and other illegal and youth-appealing products, stay out of the hands of kids,” said FDA Commissioner Robert Califf.***

1. **Personal Note:**

**On a personal note, when I owned my stores one of my cardinal rules was never, ever get involved in selling items that are illegal or questionable. I never wanted to lie in bed at night wondering if today was the day I would be caught! I followed that rule by NEVER doing a variety of problematic things. Here are just a few:**

1. **Paying people in cash, ‘off the books.”**
2. **Selling tobacco or alcohol products to underage customers.**
3. **Cheating employees on their timecards or commission earned.**

* **Not paying overtime when due.**

1. **Not paying the correct amount of sales tax due, unemployment, and property taxes.**
2. **Our Website Information:**

**In keeping with my commitment to share some items we feature on our website each month, here are my picks for this month:**

1. **Safety & Security Hint – I frequently update this page on the website to keep you updated on necessary ideas to keep your business, your staff, and your family safe.**
2. **Forms & Reports For Your Business:**

* **General Instructions for Store – Your staff should have valuable information at their fingertips. You must decide what action your staff should take in certain cases BEFORE an emergency arises. For example:**
* **What to do if you are robbed.**
* **What to do if the electricity goes off.**
* **What to do if natural gas, propane, or fuel oil is out.**
* **What to do if the water supply is off.**
* **Important Telephone Numbers – Another tool necessary for your staff to use when an emergency arises, or in normal day-to-day activities.**
* **Management and staff contact phone numbers.**
* **Alarm Company**
* **Power & Light company**
* **Emergency (police, fire, ambulance) – most locations use 9.1.1 but, in an emergency, people forget the basics.**

**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’ operations and improve profitability!**

***“Non-coachable kids become non-employable adults. Let your kids get used to someone being tough on them. It’s life, get over it.”***

**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!”***