

**Retailer Newsletter**

**February 1, 2023**

**Tom’s Business “TIPS”**

***“To Improve Profits”***

**RE: Social Media; Love It or Hate It**

**Hello,**

**I am constantly reading on social media about poor food quality, exorbitant prices, and poor customer service (or better known as No Customer Service!). I often wonder how much of an impact these comments really affect store sales/business. My honest guess is that they have a dramatic effect on store sales/profits in at least the short term. I have always believed that if you give your customers a reason to shop elsewhere, they may find a place they like just a little better. Some of those reasons could be:**

* **Better store prices (gasoline and in-store prices)**
* **More offerings and better merchandise offerings (beverages, fresh food, car wash, etc.)**
* **Cleaner store (including cleaner restrooms and cleaner parking and island area supplied with squeegees and towels.)**
* **Friendlier staff**
* **Easier access**

**I recommend you monitor these media sites regarding your own stores and be prepared to respond when necessary. When I owned my stores (long before the widespread use of cell phones and social media), I had a PO Box that was only used for customers who wished to report a problem or complaint. I used a PO Box simply to avoid any employee preventing me from seeing a letter. Today, I believe you should have a dedicated phone that customers can call to voice a complaint. I think it’s OK to let it go to voicemail; however, you should always follow-up all calls with a return phone call thanking the customer for letting you know of the issue. Here is a sample sign you should post in your store.**



**Since we are on the topic of Social Media, are you promoting your store(s) using social media? My wife is always telling me about our favorite local restaurant; an employee of the month recognition, a new menu item, or closing early due to inclement weather. I finally asked, “How do you know all this?” She gave me a ‘I can’t believe you just asked that’ look and said, “On Facebook, where do you think?” I didn’t have a clue she was watching this restaurant on FB; but apparently, she is not alone. You should also market your store on Twitter as well. My inspiration for including Social Media comments about your store this month came to me recently after reading a comment on a Nextdoor/Neighborhood local news site regarding a nearby Waffle House. We probably have all been to a Waffle House at one time or another. My personal experience is they can be really good or really bad. This one I read happened to compliment the restaurant and about 15 people chimed in with kudos, and only 2 comments were negative. Decide for yourself.**

**I recommend you have a drop box asking customers to submit their email address or cell phone number to sign up to receive Store Specials via email or text. I urge you not to ‘flood’ customers with too many messages. To encourage sign ups, offer ‘Free Coffee (or Fountain) and a donut’ or ‘Free Fountain and a hot dog’, or a ‘Free $1.00 Scratch-Off Lottery Ticket’ (if legal). Once you get a reasonable number of customers in your data base, start to offer ‘Member Only Specials’. For example, on a slow day, wash red cars only FREE, or 10¢ off per gallon gas ‘Today Only! Use your imagination!**



**According to NACS Magazine: *12.8% of shoppers who acted on a promotion spotted it in a big display at the front of the c-store. That’s significant. Be sure you display properly, neatly,* and *with a price!* Unfortunately, I still see displays in many stores that is simply a storage area. It may look to you like a display, but customers look at it as a mess of assorted products, some open boxes, and some trash too.**

**I was invited to work with a retailer at his store, and the first thing I noticed when I walked in was all the employees were wearing a t-shirt with their local college football team. When I commented about the shirts, the owner told me, “The whole town supports the team, and so do we!!” Great idea! When I owned my stores, we used to wear red KC Chiefs t-shirts on game day, and we wore blue KC Royals shirts every Friday during the baseball season. Now I understand the Mystery Shopper does not accept t-shirts (without a collar) as an approved uniform; but you know what, I thought the morale factor was worth the loss of a few points on my score. I remember when an employee forgot his/her shirt on that day, customers would point it out and ask, “How come Rick is not wearing RED today?” I looked at this as a win-win for everyone. Try it, it might catch on. In my early full-facility service station days back in the 1970’s, the uniform was spelled out: proper hat, shirt, pants, and a belt were not optional, they were expected. Looking back on those days I realized how impactful that was for the staff and the customers. Those of us in full uniform ‘looked like we belonged’, all in uniform! I still believe employees in a c-store, liquor store, grocery store, or smoke shop, look professional (uniform) when properly dressed, including a name tag. I believe customers want to get to know the people waiting on them. I don’t care if it’s the checker at the grocery store, the server at the restaurant, or the teller at the bank. Customers feel a sense of camaraderie when they get to know the staff.**

**Remember, Valentine’s Day is this month. This is the perfect opportunity to get customers into your store by advertising that you now have items they can quickly pick up for that special someone on this special day, cards, flowers, special candy, etc. It will also show them that you are conscious of their seasonal needs. Plus, this is an excellent way to bring in extra income. Check with your supplier and see what specials they are offering for this holiday. I’ve told you in the past, that when I owned my stores, we gave away 50-100 carnations, once a week. I had a local florist who did business with me, so it made it convenient for me. The CSRs usually focused the give-away to lady customers, but I remember occasionally where a male customer would come in and say, “I have a lady back at my office having a bad day” or a husband would say, “I made my wife mad this morning, can I have one to get back on her good side?” Whatever you choose, it was a feel-good situation for both us and the customers.**

**Keeping with my commitment to share some items we feature on our website each month:**

1. **The Profit Killers – read this in-depth article about the biggest issues facing the devastation of small businesses. It might be an eye-opener for you. It could well be a turning point for your business.**
2. **Business Forms & Reports For Your Business (this page is the most popular with visitors to our website)**
3. **Active Shooter Information – read this valuable report on the dos and don’ts regarding a topic that is much too commonplace in today’s world. This document needs to be in your stores Safety & Security manual.**
4. **Applicant Consent Form – this consent form is a document you should have all new hires sign on Day 1. It lets your new employee know that everything that occurs during his/her employment with you can follow them in later jobs.**

**If your store is not as profitable as you think it should be, 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!**

**"Success is simple. Do what's right, the right way, at the right time."**

**Arnold Glasgow**

**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!”***