

"Retail Etiquette"

We recently discussed an article about Retail Etiquette in our own businesses – the lost art of talking to customers. It seems that as we have gotten used to the idea of seeing customers in terms of volumes or spending, we may have lost sight of the fact that each customer is an individual. If you had a small store with a few customers, you'd give each one more attention, wouldn't you? You'd make sure that each customer returns.

I am sure none of us will be hard-pressed for an example of how we were treated at a store or business incorrectly.

Research has shown that we are most likely to remember the beginning and end of an interaction.

- The "Hi" and "Goodbye".
- Also that most people may forget what you said, but they won't forget how you made them feel.
- And lastly, that customers go where they "feel" welcome.

That means that we can have a much bigger impact on our customers just by doing a few small things right.

Here's a true story about a SUPERSPAR Retailer at Sediba Superspar near Hartebeespoort. He and his team had an incredibly simple, but incredibly effective daily duty – it was to greet and thank customers by name at the door, every day.

They would simply look a customer in the eye, smile and greet them as they enter. Most of the time they knew the customer's first name. They did this every day. When the customer left they would say thank you. Sometimes with a handshake or a friendly wave.

Did it make a difference? Well, when a brand new Pick n Pay opened up a few hundred meters down the road their opening sales were dismal. The customers kept on going where they "felt welcome". And the Superspar's turnover remained where it was, incredibly high.

We have a slightly different working environment at a service station. You rarely see the owner of a convenience store standing at the door greeting and thanking customers.

Some Retailers will say "that's just the way it is." Others may say "wait, here's an opportunity to do something different."

Which one are you?

Are customers just a part of your everyday business? Or are they the reason for your business?

BEST PRACTICES:

DON'T forget to show customers you appreciate their business by taking time to greet them properly, especially if you are called in to help during a transaction. We are often so concerned with the problem that we forget to greet the customer, introduce ourselves, apologise for them having to wait and thank them when they've made their purchase.

DO lead by example when you are working and walking around your site, greet and thank customers. If your employees see you do it, then you can comfortably expect them to do it too. If you can't be bothered to do it, they won't be bothered either.

DO make it a priority for your management team to do the same, tell them formally that it's "okay" to take time to talk to customers. Often they may ignore a customer because there's too much work to do.

DON'T assume that everyone in your employment has received the same upbringing, same education and same experiences that you have. The simple lessons of saying "Thank You", "Good morning", "Please", being respectful, etc are NOT common sense. Reward staff who have good manners when speaking and dealing with customers. Don't reward them with incentives, money or prizes. Reward staff by saying thank you, please, good morning, etc

QUICK WINS:

Research has shown that what you feel corresponds to what you do. If you "sigh", pull a sad face and sag your shoulders, you will feel increasingly sad and tired. The same applies for smiling – the act of smiling can "make" you feel happier. And, more importantly it can lift the spirits of others. People say "smile more, you'll be happier". Research has proven them right.

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