

**Retailer Newsletter**

**December 1, 2024**

**Tom’s Business “TIPS”**

***“To Improve Profits”***

**RE: The New Year Is Almost Upon Us**

**Season’s Greetings,**

***1. Since the New Year is almost here, have you considered the changes you might implement?***

**I realize we all get complacent in how we do things, including how we manage our business affairs; because let’s face it, change is downright uncomfortable. However, if you are truly honest with yourself, you will find some things that need changing. Pick a couple of categories that may be easier to change (that will give you a sense of accomplishment when completed) and pick a couple of situations that will impact your bottom line. You do not have to finish all the changes you planned. Whatever your comfort level can handle should be your gauge. To get your ideas flowing, here are a couple of suggestions you might consider:**

* **You have a marginal CSR (or manager), so now may be the time to replace him/her. As I look back over my years in this business, there were several times when I ‘thought’ I needed to keep them. After I made the change, I kicked myself because I then realized I should have done it sooner, much sooner!**
* **Make a change in your management style. I required my managers (and myself too) to attend a Dale Carnegie training session. I thought we would all benefit from becoming a better manager (and a better person).**
* **Take a hard look at the sales categories in your store, by that I mean all the departments in your store that contribute to your bottom line. Are they all profitable? Would your overall profitability increase or decrease if you made a change (or quit this category altogether?) Is there something your competition is doing that you could do (and maybe better)? For example: enhance your coffee/hot beverage selections, implement grilling items, or add fresh pizza.**

***2. Uniforms and Name Tags Revisited:***

**I have never held back on my feelings regarding CSRs and managers looking professional. I believe besides being well-groomed they should also wear a uniform with a name tag. Look Professional! Employees wearing a uniform will feel better about their job and act like it. Your front-line staff should wear a name tag because your customers want to know who is waiting on them. The name tag helps the rapport between customer and employee. I read this article recently at *CStore Decisions*. Take a look.**

[**https://cstoredecisions.com/2024/11/13/a-uniform-approach**](https://cstoredecisions.com/2024/11/13/a-uniform-approach-to-store-operations/?spMailingID=133822&puid=613860&E=613860&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=133822)

***3. The Holiday Season is upon us:***

**We are constantly reminded about those people who are less fortunate than us during this time of year. It wouldn’t be Christmas without seeing the Salvation Army bell ringers outside retail stores. It was during this time of year that I challenged two employees (one was a manager and the other was a long-time CSR) with the responsibility of aiding customers that were truly in need. Both had been with me for more years than I cared to count, but I trusted their judgment. I told them if a customer appeared to truly be in need came into our store, to do the right thing! For example, if a customer was scrapping up coins to put some gas in their car or a customer was struggling to come up with the money to buy a gallon of milk or loaf of bread. We all agreed that a customer short of change to buy a pack of cigarettes or a bottle of Coke didn’t qualify. They only helped customers a couple of times in the first December I tried it, but it made a lasting impression on both of them for the way they were able to help people truly in need. After the second December implementation of this program, it was expanded to year-round; because we realized that people struggled all the time, not just during the Holiday Season. I expanded it to an additional CSR and as far as I can remember, we never ‘helped’ more than 2-3 people in any given month. These trusted employees never hesitated to tell deserving customers that ‘Our Business’ takes pride in helping our customers, no strings attached.**

***4. Video Games in Convenience Stores:***

**I understand these video games have become quite popular in many locations across the country. I realize they are profitable in some instances. Also, understand they appear to fall into a ‘grey area’ in most states - are they gambling machines or not? In some states, the official lottery people are overseeing these games. Be sure you are compliant. What do I have against these machines, here are my answer(s):**

* **Customers are loitering inside your store for hours on end.**
* **These customers trash the areas around the machines, i.e. littering, some are even smoking, and they put their feet up on counters/shelving.**
* **These people are probably shoplifting items like chips, candy, and other items they can ‘slip’ into their pockets while your staff is not watching.**
* **They are keenly aware of what your staff is doing, what your staff is seeing, and what your staff is NOT seeing. Could some of these people be thinking about an armed robbery when they believe you are the most susceptible? Maybe!**
* **If there are several individuals crowded around playing the machines, customers may feel intimidated to walk through the store for fear of violence or danger.**
* **Keep these thoughts in mind as you consider if the machines are really, truly profitable.**

***5. Yes, I still do One-on-One Instore Consulting:***

**I frequently receive phone calls or emails asking if I still conduct In-Store Consulting. Yes, I do. My In-Store Consulting numbers have returned to pre Covid-19 visits. I think most businesses have reopened, more people are out shopping, and the challenges of staying profitable are still there. Retailers, large and small, must re-evaluate their business daily! That’s right, you cannot afford to ‘take your eye off the ball’ even for a moment. I’ll be the first to admit, when I owned my stores there were times during my 30 years as a retailer that I allowed negative trends to continue for too long. Most of the stores I have worked with were having problems and some were even on the ‘edge’, about to go down. In many cases, we were able to resurrect them into a viable business. A couple I worked with were literally on the courthouse steps, about to be foreclosed by their bank, supplier, or government for nonpayment of taxes. In those cases, we were able to convince the entity pursuing their money that we had a viable plan to restructure the debt and move forward and stay profitable.**

**I have even been invited to work with retailers whose stores were profitable and running smoothly. They asked my advice on how they can further improve their business. I must admit, these types of stores are very challenging since the changes necessary are not always obvious as I peruse the location. I always admired these operators because they were trying to make a good business even better.**

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***“You either get paid for decisions you made years ago, or you pay for decisions you made years ago. The choice is yours.”***

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**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
Thomas W. Terrono

**T&S Management Services, LLC**

***C-Store Rescue*
Instructor / Consultant for the Convenience Store Industry
Lee's Summit MO 64082-4864**

**816.550.8048**



**tom.tsms@gmail.com**

**[www.tsmanagementservices.com](http://www.tsmanagementservices.com)**

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