

**Retailer Newsletter**

**November 1, 2024**

**Tom’s Business “TIPS”**

***“To Improve Profits”***

**RE: Backoffice vs. QuickBooks**

**Greetings,**

***1. Backoffice systems vs. QuickBooks:***

**A couple of months ago I discussed the pros and cons of using a Backoffice System designed exclusively for convenience stores instead of spending countless hours using QuickBooks. I received quite a few calls/emails after that newsletter. Most of those retailers agreed that the ‘C-Store Backoffice Systems’ provided the best results for managing the business. However, I did have a couple of conversations with retailers who were adamant that they could set up the QuickBooks program to provide the same information I shared with you. Those comments motivated me to reply that it would definitely be cheaper and easier to operate a Backoffice System designed exclusively for C-stores, than the time, energy, and $$ spent to make the QuickBooks system provide the same precise information, similar to or maybe somewhat the same information. One of my favorite questions I always ask about the do-it-yourself back-office systems is “Does your program alert you when your DIR (Daily Inventory Reconciliation) is off? By that I mean, most c-store systems will require you to include your fuel tank inventory. Do your starting gallons (+) deliveries (-) sales = ending gallons fall within state/federal requirements? If you do not check this daily, you risk having an unmonitored underground fuel leak. I think I proved my point to a couple of individuals, but some were determined that they were computer knowledgeable enough to handle it. That comment brought back my usual comeback, “Therein lies the problem; the time you spend in your office using your energy to perfect the best possible spreadsheet, could be much better spent out front managing your business! Also, “Spending time at your desk in your office is *yesterday’s* business, it’s done, you cannot improve what’s done. Spending time out front, where the action is *today’s* business, that you can have an impact on.**

***2. In-store Promotions:***

**I walked into a local QSR recently and I saw this wheel on the counter. I noticed the cashiers having fun asking customers to ‘try their luck’ when making any purchases. *(what did they win)***



**After seeing that, I thought about a retailer I met in Wisconsin who had a sign on the counter. He offered a chance for customers to receive a ‘Free Fountain/Coffee’ if the dice matched the ‘Shake of the Day’. I was at the store for several hours and watched numerous customers take their drink to the counter and roll the dice. Those who lost would grumble to themselves and pay for their drink. While the people who did match the winning ‘Shake of the Day’, they would whoop and holler (almost like they won Powerball). It’s good to have your customers excited about shopping at your store. All it takes is a few signs you can print on your computer, a cup, and dice.**



**Use your imagination, maybe you could promote your car wash using the same ‘Shake of the Day’, or maybe promote a new item in your store, Buy 1 Get 1 Free if they matched the ‘Shake’.**

***3. Restroom Reputation Affects Customer Perception:***

**I know I have brought this subject up numerous times over the years, but the attached article caught my attention, and I thought I would share.**

**This article was shared in CStore Decisions.**

[**https://cstoredecisions.com/2024/09/13/restroom-reputation**](https://cstoredecisions.com/2024/09/13/restroom-reputation-affects-customer-perception/?spMailingID=125957&puid=613860&E=613860&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=125957)

***4. According to NACS Daily:***

**The average hourly salary for full time associates in c-stores was $14.73 in 2023. Now keep in mind that’s a national number, your area could be different. How do you compare? Another thought: your starting salary should be close to what your local Walmart and your local grocery stores are offering. Check it out and see if you are competitive.**

***5. Customer Service Revisited:***

**Another topic I have discussed numerous times over the years in *Tom’s Tips* is Customer Service. I feel passionate about Customer Service, because it literally makes OR breaks a business. Friends of mine recently had a problem with their local bank, where they have done business for almost 40 years. After a possible scam involving their account (which looks now like it’s the bank’s fault), they were told by the branch manager that they must have their laptop checked at a specific local computer store for malware. After nothing malicious was found on the laptop, the bank refused to reimburse them for the fee they paid to make sure their laptop had not been hacked. My personal feeling about Customer Service is not the day-to-day business transactions. While Customer Greetings (Hello/Thank you/Please come back) are important and clean restrooms are important, the true benchmark is ‘How do you take care of the customer when they have a problem?’ That to me is the true definition of Customer Service. As with my friends, they worked year after year with their local bank never asking for anything out of the ordinary; and when they did have a problem (which still appears to be the banks fault), the bank officers turned their back on them (and their future business). Ask yourself, “How do I address my customer concerns when THEY have a problem with my staff or the products I sell?” You decide!**

***6. 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 more businesses have opened up, 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 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.**

***"The greatest barrier to success is the fear of failure."***

***Sven Goran Eriksson***

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