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The Weekly Retail Experience



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Obsession: Your 2008 Strategic Competitive Advantage

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One way to not simply survive but thrive during the current financial (insert whatever word you'd like to use here - situation, opportunity, challenge, crisis) **is to become even more obsessed about your customer's shopping experience.**

Contrary to what some people are saying, **customers are shopping and they are spending money.** Malls were packed with shoppers last weekend. While consumers are not spending the way they did this time in 2007 or 2006, it's not really that far off. They're just being more selective in what they buy and where they buy.

What I see when I walk malls and strip centers are retailers who haven't changed many of their actions beyond marking merchandise down faster and faster. Sure, customers want value but they also want to feel good. **As a specialty retailer, part of your value proposition is how you make your customer feel when he/she is in your store and, most importantly, when he/she makes a purchase.**

Is there any better time to make customers feel good about their experience with you?

Since that retail experience is indeed part of your value proposition, you must deliver a better experience in 2008 than you did in the past. Failure to do so will have a direct impact on both your top and bottom lines.

Ask yourself and your team these six questions about your customer's 2008 shopping experience:

1. Does your customer feel a positive and energetic vibe when he/she enters the store?

This usually comes from a combination of the staff's attitude, quality of greeting, music, and other variables.

2. Is it clear to your customer that he/she is the staff's highest priority - without being pounced on as they walk in the door?

Some retailers have cut back staffing to a point that the employee's priority is now completing tasks instead of focusing on the customer.

3. Are you creating some type of memorable moment for your customers?

What is happening inside your store that isn't happening anywhere else? Is it that bottle of water your customer is offered, a comfortable chair, a piece of candy or a product sample? While the best memorable moments are usually the result of your staff doing something spontaneous with a customer, a planned strategic memorable moment is a very effective tool.

4. Are your customers able to check out quickly when they're ready?

Customers never feel good if they have to wait a long time to finalize their purchase. Sometimes they don't even bother. A friend of mine was at a department store last weekend and wanted to buy over \$400 worth of clothes but the only register open was much too slow for him.

5. Is your store impeccable?

Not just clean, not just well merchandised, impeccable! Beyond the staff, the store environment plays a big part in the customer's experience. Are the product displays well maintained? Are new shipments put out quickly without causing any disruption to the customer? Is the cashwrap clutter-free?

6. Most important of all, is every single employee in your company obsessed with your customer's experience?

That by far is the most important thing you can and should be doing right now. Every employee in your company or store should be obsessed with the customer's experience because they know that it is your highest priority and **there's no one more obsessed about the customer's experience than you.**

So let me ask, are you obsessed enough to be a strategic competitive advantage?

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Last week our subscribers received the following newsletters:

Monday: *Taking It Personal* (Why successful managers take store results personal.)

Tuesday: *Obsession: Your 2008 Strategic Competitive Advantage* (See above)

Wednesday: *Musings: Baseball, Productivity, and Two Types of To-Do Lists*
(How to work in and on the business.)

Thursday: *Two Ears and a Sale* (The importance of listening in creating sales.)

Friday: *What's it Going to be Today: Distractions and Reactions or Actions and Satisfaction?* (Succeeding in spite of any economic challenges.)

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Last Week On

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Book Doug For Your Next Event

He's engaging, funny, informative, and motivating. And that's just what his wife says. Doug's perfect for a retail manager's meeting, tradeshow, or local business event.

Recommend Doug to your trade association or company and if they book him you'll receive a free month in our coaching and mentor program!

Not Your Average Store Visit

Maybe we shouldn't even call it a store visit. Ask our clients and they would call them "Extremely Intensive One-Day Sessions That Leaves Your Head Spinning and Full of Great Ideas."

Attention Retailers in Phoenix. Doug be in your city in early May and has one day available to work with you and your team.

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