

STOP In The Name Of The Customer Experience

By Doug Fleener

Here are ten things to STOP doing so your customer receives a better experience.

1. Stop saying "How are you?" to customers unless you are the first person they encounter when they walk into the store. I was recently in a department store and I must have been asked how I was at least ten times. By the sixth or seventh time I wanted to start answering, "I WAS fine." If you encounter a customer in the store just smile and say hello.

2. Stop saying "May I help you?" It's tired. Everyone says it. Customers are programmed to reply "Just looking." At least say "How are you?"

3. Stop having personal conversations while customers are in the store. Yes, I know this is a tough one; I've been guilty of this one myself many times. The fact is that these conversations have a negative impact on the customer experience and they are costing you sales and profits.

4. Stop doing major merchandise moves while the store is open. From time to time we do need to move products around while the store is open but avoid doing anything major during store hours. I like to adhere to the three product rule: You can only have three products out of place while the store is open. Following this rule might inconvenience us but it is better for the customer.

5. Stop standing right next to customers as they're looking at products unless you are actively engaged with them. While I'm sure no one reading this newsletter would do this, I have to include it since it is SO annoying. This is one of the quickest ways to drive customers out of your store, second only to asking a customer "How are you?" ten times.

6. Stop taking care of the customer who calls on the phone if you're already helping a customer in the store. I've never figured out why retailers give the customer on the phone higher priority than the customer who is standing in front of us ready to spend money. Get in the habit of telling the customer on the phone that you are with another customer but you'll be happy to take their number and call back within a certain time frame. Then make sure you call back within that time.

7. Stop drinking or eating on the floor. I know a lot of people don't like that one but it is completely unprofessional. If your store is incredibly busy and your staff can't get away from their positions then at least keep the drink under the counter.



8. Stop sending away the customer who needs to use the bathroom. This is a pet peeve of mine that I've written about often. I'm on a mission to get retailers across the country to open up their bathrooms. It just makes good business sense. Why spend money to drive customers into your store only to force them to leave just because they drank a Venti Latte before shopping? I love how the Brighton stores build a bathroom for their customers into every one of their mall stores.

9. Stop talking with the customer as if they are not going to buy that day. One of the biggest mistakes retail associates make is they assume the customer is not buying rather than assuming they are. Matt and I were discussing on our trip last week my realization that one of the biggest mistakes we made at Bose was training employees to use assumptive language rather than training them to assume the sale itself. (A subtle but important difference.) Unless the customer says they are not buying that day, talk to them as if they are.

10. Stop what you're doing and every now and then show your appreciation to your co-workers, your staff, your customer, and your friends and family. Remember, people don't know how much you care until you show them.

Now go deliver an awesome store experience!

About the author: Doug Fleener is founder of the Dynamic Experiences Group. He is a veteran retailer with more than 25 years of hands-on retail experience with world-class retailers including Bose Corporation and The Sharper Image. He has also owned and operated his own specialty stores. His new book, *The Profitable Retailer: 56 surprisingly simple and effective lessons to boost your sales and profits* published by Acanthus Publishing is available at www.theprofitableretailer.com or at Amazon.com.

Doug is now president and managing partner of Dynamic Experiences Group LLC, a Lexington based retail consulting firm dedicated to helping retailers create unique customer experiences that results in higher sales and profits. Learn more at www.dynamicexperiencesgroup.com or call Doug at 866-535-6331.

Fleener also shares his knowledge of experience based retailing in a series of custom key notes and workshops designed for stores, businesses, corporations, non-profits, and trade associations of all sizes. His casual style and quick wit make him not just a crowd pleaser but also an incredible motivator, encouraging people to take action and deliver extraordinary experiences to customers and employees alike. Learn more at www.dougfleener.com.