



Ten Ways to Know if You're Working or Clerking

By Doug Fleener

I recently talked with an executive from a specialty store chain who is worried about the economy's impact on his stores. Sales were off so he contacted us to see what we might be able to do to help. **I said I would shop a few of his stores and follow-up with him.**

After visiting four stores in three different markets it was clear that indeed he has a problem - but not the one he thinks he has. **The problem I saw didn't have anything to do with an economic slowdown but it had a lot to do with a customer focus slowdown.** In every store I visited the staff was not very attentive to the customers and didn't seem that concerned if the customer made a purchase or not.

While in the fourth store I heard my friend Donny's booming voice in my head call out, **"THE PROBLEM, PEOPLE, IS THAT YOU'RE CLERKING IT AND NOT WORKING IT!"** (I'm often grateful that people can't hear what sometimes goes on inside my head.)

As I looked around I saw all the signs of a staff that was clerking the customer, not working with customers. Since you're a regular reader of *The Weekly Retail Experience* **I'm hoping you don't lack the customer and selling focus that this retailer did.**

Just to be sure, **here are the top ten signs you know you're working with customers and not just clerking them.** (*I'm not going to bold each one so please read them all.*)

1. A customer rarely gets to the counter to make a purchase without having already been engaged by you or one of your teammates. Actually, very few customers even get to the counter who aren't brought there by a staff member.
2. You *enjoy* greeting and engaging customers when they come into your store.
3. You're not behind the counter unless you're ringing a sale.
4. You naturally ask your customers questions to see how they can best be served.
5. Unless the store is extremely busy you know exactly which customers have been assisted by which one of your colleagues.
6. Asking the customer if they'd like to purchase what you're showing them has become second nature - and if it hasn't yet it's your goal.
7. You already know what product you're going to show the customer after you've finished showing the current one.

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8. You're disappointed when your customer doesn't make a purchase but you never let them see it.
9. Customers seek you out when they come into your store.
10. You're extremely focused on providing a great experience to every customer who comes into your store.
11. You try to go above and beyond for every single customer.

So let me ask, are you working or clerking?

About the author: Doug Fleener is a veteran retailer with over 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. In his ten years at Bose, Doug grew the Retail Direct Group from four to 100 stores and was instrumental in developing Bose's unique and engaging retail methods.

Doug is now president and managing partner of Dynamic Experiences Group LLC, a Lexington, MA based retail and customer experience consulting firm dedicated to helping retailers improve their customer experiences that results in higher sales and profits.

Fleener is the author of the book *The Profitable Retailer: 56 surprisingly simple and effective lessons to boost your sales and profits*. He is a frequent speaker around the world on retail issues and his insights has been covered in leading business media including *The New York Times*, *Entrepreneur*, and *Shopping Centers Today*. Along with partner Matt Norcia they write the popular retail blog *Retail Contrarian*.

Doug lives in Lexington, Massachusetts with his wife and two daughters, where in his free time he barbecues while listening to Jimmy Buffet music.

Learn more at www.dynamicexperiencesgroup.com or call Doug at 866-535-6331.