



The Seven Deadly Sins of Retail Management

By Doug Fleener

I'm sure that most of you are familiar with the Seven Deadly Sins of pride, envy, gluttony, lust, anger, greed, and sloth. You might not be as familiar with the Seven Deadly Sins of Retail Management, those foibles and pitfalls that impede our abilities as managers and our capacity to achieve our desired success. Let's look at the Seven Deadly Sins of Retail Management.

Procrastination

We can call procrastination "sloth with excuses." Procrastination can devastate a store and a manager's career. I've seen managers lose their jobs because they wouldn't get around to doing some of the simplest paperwork. I'm sure all of us procrastinate from time to time, but most of us don't do it to the point that it has a negative impact on our customers or employees.

Arrogance

There's a fine line between confidence and arrogance, with the difference being the manager's own view of his/her importance. I've met some very talented people who failed as managers because they somehow got it into the heads that they were more important than others in the organization. Successful managers understand that to succeed they must serve both their customers and their employees.

Apathy

Managers are the leaders of their stores. By their actions they determine the level of passion, excitement, and pride felt by the rest of the staff. When managers lose interest it has a domino effect that falls all the way to the bottom line. The problem in retail chains is that because apathy is so difficult to identify in retail management, mid-level managers and executives let apathetic managers remain in their positions.

Gossip

This "sin" looks harmless on their surface but can cause major damage to a store team and manager's credibility. Gossip often happens without the participants even realizing what they're doing. The best way to avoid gossip is to never say something about someone unless you would be okay with that person standing besides you as you say it. I know that whenever I start a conversation with "Just between you and me. . ." there's a good chance I shouldn't be having that conversation.

Inflexibility

Great stores are the result a manager/leader who can take a group of strong individuals and have them execute as a team. One of the biggest barriers to this occurring is the manager's need to exert control rather than influence. Anytime a manager says "my way or the highway" then the chances are they're losing their team. Remaining flexible and open to new ideas invariably leads to growth of the staff, the manager, and the overall store sales.

Inappropriateness

Creating any type of hostile workplace is completely unacceptable. While a manager rarely does do that on purpose, it happens with more frequency that most of us even know. The key is to not only not go near "the line" but to stay far, far away from it.



Lack of accountability

The biggest impediment to a store achieving goal is almost never foot traffic or inventory availability. The biggest culprit is mediocrity. Specifically, the store management team allowing mediocrity to take hold in the store. This often is the result of a manager or management team not holding the staff accountable for their actions because they don't want to have those difficult conversations necessary to turn around or remove underperforming employees. Not only is it unfair to the rest of the team (and the company as a whole) to not hold underperforming employees accountable, it's also unfair to the employee themselves.

So let me ask, how's your sin level?

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.