

Holiday Shopping

Is it a Trick or Treat for Your Customers?

by
KAZ

I can't believe it! Halloween Candy gets put out into stores before kids go back to school. Before we know it will be Thanksgiving items and then very shortly followed by Christmas or even simultaneously as I've now seen.

Whatever business your in, remember you **are** in business and that involves customers and many of them. Preferably repeat visits from many and even more referrals. So, the big question is "**How can you insure this? Measure it!**"

One of my many mentors once said, "KAZ if it's not worth measuring it's not worth doing!" Very left brain, very logical and very correct in profitable business.

I recently went to lunch at restaurant and was deeply saddened by the experience. It's a chain restaurant and one I use to visit in Atlanta every other day. This day it was about 3.00pm when we arrived and nearly 50% of the self serve dishes were empty, or so low the food didn't look very appealing.

We ate a slow lunch thinking they would fill up the items, but after 45 minutes, very little had been cleaned or refilled. As we were about to leave we noticed the next shift coming on. As they walked through the front door they were playing with their hair, mouth and/or nose. Within minutes they were refilling the out of stock items with bare hands. Maybe they washed, maybe not.

When the manager on duty asked how our meals were, I told him I was disappointed that so much was empty and it was never refilled. His reply was "Oh, you should have told me!" Why? I'm the customer, not the manager. My responsibility is much different to his, but he was not aware of that.

It also struck me funny that he had walked by the food line at least 8 – 10 times during the time we were there and even brought out a bowl of lettuce when all three bowls were empty.

Am I picky? Maybe. But I'm the one who pays the check and **chooses** to return or not. Will I return to this once favorite restaurant? Not at that location. No matter how you want to judge, classify, categorize or blame customers – if you **view them** as customers they'll walk (with their money) if something doesn't please them. Make them "**partners for life**" as Carl Sewell calls them and they will give you the feedback you need to grow, prosper, change and develop far better than you will on your own.

So, is shopping, eating, playing or supporting your business a treat or a Nightmare on Elm Street? Here's some easy ways to measure what's happening in your business.

1. Have a mystery shopper visit all locations. Give them a checklist of what they are to look for and go over it very carefully with them. Let them know your level of cleanliness, friendliness, freshness, and so on.
2. Reimburse them for what ever they buy, or let them return the merchandise for their money back. If it's a service like an oil change – give them their money back or vouchers for free services in the future.
3. Mystery shop an area in your business at least 3 times in the same month on different shifts.
4. Mystery shop all levels of employees from management to beginning staff.
5. Put all mystery shop visits in writing and be very specific with details.
6. Use different scenarios for the shoppers and let them pick at random – single person, complainer, grouchy, easy going, in a hurry, business like, etc
7. If people do it in your business, **measure it**. Answering phones, driving trucks, mowing yards, selling products, fixing something, bathroom cleans, serving food, cooking food – the list is endless.
8. Once the business is shopped a meeting with all employees should be called, the mystery shop explained, the results and where to go from here. To be successful, monthly checks should be conducted on at least 50% of the job descriptions. Don't be shocked! The small amount of money you invest here will out weigh the lost, thrown away or even stolen food, the angry customer who never wants to shop at your business again and worse the publicity you will get from every bad episode.
9. Look at you marketing and advertising budget and spend 5% of that on mystery shopping and you'll be amazed at how much business will increase
10. Reward those who get 95 % or better on their mystery shops and reward the manager and the person who gets 100% - this incentive will help to lead people to do the right thing all the time. Eliminate those people who consistently score low – after you have warned them, retrained them and given 2 written letters describing the unacceptable behavior.
11. Be consistent once you start the program! Grow your people in awareness for doing business the correct way and you grow your bottom line while cutting costs.

For a free example of a shoppers checklist simply email KAZ on KAZ@CompetitiveBalance.com

KAZ is an international speaker, author, consultant and coach who focuses on working with people who want to **BE** more and organizations that want to **DO** more. For a free booklist, more articles or a copy of **KAZ's** speaking topics simply visit www.CompetitiveBalance.com and let us know how we can help you.