

# Does Your Store or Office Need CPR?

By Karen E. Hipp

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There is a local restaurant in my neck of the woods that had become very popular for their eclectic cuisine. They received rave reviews from all the local restaurant critics and they became a popular place to dine.

About 3 months ago I read in the paper that the owner had decided to sell the restaurant to the current chef. The new owner (and chef) was quoted as saying that he was going to change the name of the restaurant to "Paul's" (this is not the real name). The new owner's name was "Paul." He said that his mother liked it. (Well of course she did). Here comes the bad part. The restaurant already had a very successful and well-known name. He could have usurped the power of that name for a long time, while he started to slowly build his own brand. No one would know "Paul's." Fatal mistake #1.

I put this little story in the back of my mind.

Recently, I was walking/shopping down in the area of "Paul's" restaurant. As I walked by, there were several flyers (the homemade kind) that had been taped to the once gorgeous windows. It automatically cheapened the fairly high priced restaurant in my mind. Then I noticed that a big red "P" had been painted (not very well) on one of the entrance columns. Now we're well into Fatal mistake #3. Part of the awnings on the outside had been painted and the rest were not. Plus, it looked like they had been spray painted. This was at least two months after they opened under the new name. Do you see where I'm going with this?

I haven't eaten at the restaurant since the change and I'm sure (?) the food is still good, but the impression that I was left with would make me choose another place. Too much competition to take a risk for an expensive dinner.

Similar to this, I have a client that owns a chain of hair salons. I went to this client for years and begged him to take down the old photo's of hairstyles from 15 years ago, torn and faded. And this was not a cheap salon! I sent out a survey to his clients asking them a variety of image/marketing/price questions (much to his chagrin). A lot of people said they thought the salon was kind of "dirty." Although it really wasn't, the walls needed a fresh coat of paint, the pictures needed to be replaced and a variety of other little touch ups that were

inexpensive, but important to the client needed to be done.

Are there ways that you can spruce things up around your store or office this summer?

Put a fresh coat of paint on those walls or paint it a different, more vibrant color.

Take down any outdated or faded posters, pictures, flyers.

Please don't put hand written signs in your windows such as "Be back in 15 minutes" or any such thing. You can buy these signs inexpensively at any office supply store. I know you're always in a hurry, but your image depends on this!

I hope your voice-mail or recorded message about hours, etc. at least sounds professional. I have personally re-done many of my client's own recordings to make it sound inviting and welcoming (I used to do voice-overs for radio commercials). Ask a friend or a family member to do this for you if they have a good speaking voice.

Can you put an inexpensive flowering pot outside your front door?

Does your office or store smell nice?

Try a fresh bouquet of flowers at the front desk or entrance. These can be purchased for a song at the grocery store and you only need to replace them once a week.

All of this may seem trivial to you, but believe me, your customer notices and the little computer in their head takes notes.

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