

What "Retail Snoops" Wished Store Management Knew!

By Anne M. Obarski

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Anne M. Obarski
anne@merchandiseconcepts.com

Merchandise Concepts <http://www.merchandiseconcepts.com>

A "secret shop" can cause a grown store manager to weep. It's unfortunate because the complaints that customers have are so easy to fix...if the store management is willing! My "retail snoops" business takes me all across the country, and everywhere I go I find the following "clues" that stores need to focus on!

Clue #1: Always greet the customer warmly.

95% of shoppers are never greeted upon entering a store. Worse yet, most are rarely approached while they are in the store!

Clue #2: Display sincere interest in helping the customer.

72% of shoppers complain that associates would not make eye contact when speaking with a customer and appeared to be "bothered" when the customer asked a question of the associate.

Clue #3: Maintain a pleasant shopping atmosphere.

Shoppers can be the first to tell you if your racks are too tight or if your signing is clear and helpful. Dirty dressing rooms and untidy wrap desks can be some of the things that make the customer not want to come back to your store.

Clue #4: Motivate store employees to always be productive.

"The sales associates were talking behind the wrap desk." "I didn't want to bother the sales girl because she was sitting behind the desk finishing her dinner." "The sales people were very busy folding merchandise, so I didn't ask for help." These are common complaints I hear all of the time. Associates need to be productive but they also need to be aware that the customer is not an interruption of their work!

Clue #5: Thank the customer for shopping in your store and ask them to return-even if they didn't buy!

Customers leave businesses everyday feeling like they were just taken care of by a robot. "Thanks, and have a nice day." Did the associate really mean that, or was it just a way to keep the line moving? The last place that the customer usually remembers in a store is the checkout counter or wrap desk. If you want to increase repeat and referral business, make the last words you have with

the customer ones that will make them happy they shopped in your store.

These are five simple clues that come to you from your customers. Investigate the possibilities of improving your business by focusing on them, every day!

Anne M. Obarski is the "Eye on Retail Performance". She is an author, professional speaker, retail consultant and Executive Director of Merchandise Concepts. Anne works with companies who are performance, profit and people focused and she helps leaders see their businesses through their customers' eyes. Anne's mystery shoppers have secretly "snooped" over 2000 stores searching for excellence in customer service. Reach Anne at <http://www.merchandiseconcepts.com> or anne@merchandiseconcepts.com

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