

Customer Service



Key Aspects for Success

- **Staffing your store**
- **Customer Interaction**
- **Merchandising Effectively**
- **Products and Pricing**
- **Customer Feedback**

No two stores are alike – use this as a guide to find what works best for your store

Staffing Your Store

- **Hire the right people**
 - **Ideally, you'll be able to find someone with the right attitude and ability.**
 - **If not, it's easier to train someone to increase their ability than to change their attitude.**
 - **Hire on attitude over ability.**
 - ***What are some of the issues you face when hiring and what are some of the solutions that you have found?***

Staffing Your Store

- **Train staff constantly**
 - **When you invest time and energy into training your staff, they'll feel appreciated and motivated to increase their product knowledge.**
 - **Identify strengths and weaknesses of each staff member. Play to their strengths and strengthen their weaknesses.**
 - ***What has and hasn't worked for your team when it comes to training staff?***

Staffing Your Store

- **Dealing with negative staff issues**
 - **Be consistent with all staff members.**
 - **Don't play favorites.**
 - **Address the issue(s) right away.**
 - **Failing to do so will only make the situation worse.**
 - **Disgruntled staff members will not give great customer service.**
 - ***Has your store ever had to deal with negative staff issues and how did you handle it?***

Staffing Your Store

- **Reward success**
 - **Despite being the easiest part, it's often overlooked.**
 - **Help each other to be right, not wrong.**
 - **Take the time to let your staff know that you appreciate them.**
 - **Share sales numbers with staff.**
 - (example) – “Our sales numbers were up 5% last month. Thank you for doing what you do to contribute to that.”
 - **Challenge staff to sell more.**
 - **People oftentimes work up to, but not beyond your expectations. Don't make it impossible, but don't settle for good enough either.**
 - ***What are some ways that you reward success at your store?***

Customer Interaction

- **It starts with YOU!**
 - Your staff look to you for direction and as a role model.
 - If you're not giving great customer service, don't expect them to.
 - *What do you do to give great customer service?*

Customer Interaction

- **Greet every customer that comes in the door.**
 - **A simple acknowledgement and a smile can go a long ways towards a positive shopping experience.**
 - **Acknowledging customers can also help to deter theft.**
 - ***What's a greeting that works well for you?***

Customer Interaction

- **Have something special for the kids.**
 - **We have suckers. Kids are excited to come in the store with their parents. The parents are able to use the suckers as incentive for their kids to behave. We all win!**

Customer Interaction

- **Get to know your customers**
 - **Interact with your regulars without getting into politics or other hot button issues.**
 - **Offer to carry out purchases for folks that might be too proud to ask.**
 - **We've got one gal that will absolutely refuse to let us carry her two cases of beer out the door if we ask her if she wants help. If we rephrase it and ask her if she'll *let us* help her, she's more than happy to accept the offer.**
 - **Keep an eye out for troublemakers. Don't be afraid to refuse service when the need arises.**

Merchandising Effectively

- **Signage and Pricing**

- **Be consistent with signage.**

- **Avoid handwritten signs.**

- **Have accurate prices.**

- **Use one color sign stock for regular prices, another color for sale prices, and another for closeout prices.**

- **Include your store's logo on signage.**

- ***What signage and pricing strategy has worked well for your store?***



Merchandising Effectively

- **Promoting Promotions**
 - **Make sure that staff are aware of all current promotions.**
 - **Vendor rebates, current sales, drawings, closeout merchandise, etc.**
 - **Encourage staff to share promotion info with customers when applicable.**
 - **When customers feel like you've got their best interest in mind, they'll be back.**
 - ***What has and hasn't worked for you to promote promotions?***

Merchandising Effectively

- **Closeout Merchandise**
 - **Just because it's on closeout, doesn't mean it shouldn't be merchandised to sell.**
 - **Sign products so that customers can tell how much they're saving.**
 - **Locate closeout merchandise towards the back of your store.**
 - **Use free goods to price down closeout items without losing your profit margin.**
 - ***What strategies have and haven't worked well for you when merchandising closeout items to sell?***

Merchandising Effectively

- **Keep shelves and rails stocked**
 - **If customers can't see it, they can't buy it.**
 - **Prioritize stocking high sale items and items that are stocked in the cooler.**
 - **Beer Caves work great for high volume case quantity items.**
 - **If you earn the reputation of always being out of stock, customers will go somewhere else.**

- ***What stocking strategies have and haven't worked well for your store?***

Products and Pricing

- **Know what does and doesn't sell**
- **Keep up to date on market trends**
- **Shop the competition**
- **Get involved with MMBA group buys**
- **Listen to Customer complaints and compliments**

Products and Pricing

- **Know what does and doesn't sell**
 - **If it's been idle for more than a year, it's time to drop it.**
 - **Run inventory reports to analyze sales history.**
 - **Inventory your stock quarterly so that you can rely on your stock numbers to be accurate.**
 - **Identify sales trends to avoid being understocked or overstocked.**
 - **Just because something is a better buy at a higher quantity, that doesn't always mean it's time to stock up.**
 - **Use free goods to price closeout items accordingly.**
 - **Merchandise closeout items in a permanent area towards the back of your store. Avoid selling things out of shopping carts.**
 - **Show customers how much they're saving.**
 - ***What works best for you when it comes to keeping inventory under control?***

Products and Pricing

- **Keep up to date on market trends**
 - **The MMBA weekly Newsletter**
 - **PROOF quarterly magazine**
 - **Beverage Dynamics**
 - **The MUNICIPAL Liquor Store magazine**
 - **Communicate with your sales reps.**
 - **Communicate with other MMBA members and Board Members.**
 - *How do you keep up with market trends?*

Products and Pricing

- **Shop the competition**
 - Know where your store fits in the market.
 - If you've got a muni nearby, communicate with each other to ensure that you've both got the correct pricing.
 - If you've got private owners nearby, visit them regularly to see where their prices are at.
 - If you're priced higher, find a way to get your cost down so that you can meet or beat your competition's pricing.
 - *What are some ways that you stay on top of your pricing strategy?*

Products and Pricing

- **Get involved with MMBA Group Buys**
 - **Group buys have no disadvantage for municipal liquor stores.**
 - **They allow you to get the best price, but not too much stock on hand.**
 - **Use group buying to lower your cost and bring your pricing into line with private stores that have bigger buying power.**
 - ***How have you taken advantage of MMBA Group Buys to lower your price and increase sales?***

Customer Feedback

- **Develop a form for staff to fill out when a customer requests an item that you may not carry.**
 - **Include the customer name and phone number so that you can call them with pricing before you order the item in.**
- **Listen to Customer complaints and compliments**
 - **Oftentimes, the biggest pain in your rear end can end up being one of your most loyal customers if you take care of them within reason.**
- **Where can you measure customer feedback?**
 - **Google Reviews**
 - **Store's social media presence**

 - ***What has and hasn't worked well for you to measure customer feedback?***

In Closing

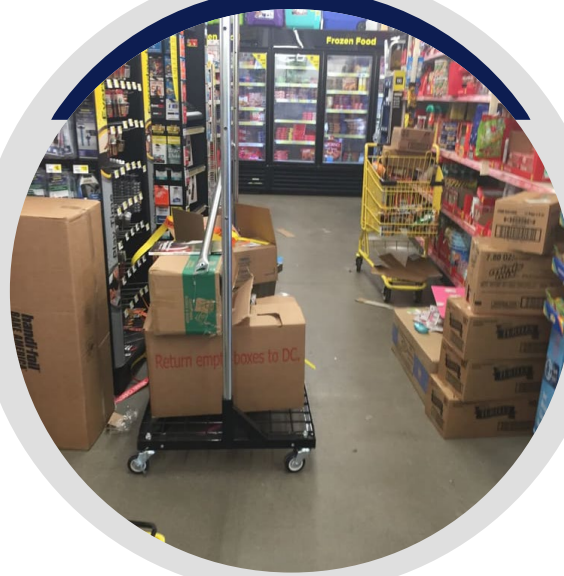
- **Investing in your staff will pay off more than you think.**
- **Your attitude is a mirror; be what you want to see.**
- **Lead by example.**
- **Listen to customer feedback.**
- **Don't become complacent and settle for good enough.**
- **Use MMBA resources to strengthen yourselves and increase sales at your store.**
- **Price items in line with your competition.**
- **Keep your store clean and well stocked.**
- **Be proactive, not just reactive.**

– Questions?



WHAT IS GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE

LAKEVILLE LIQUORS | SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28



CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customer service is the provision of service to customers before, during and after a purchase. - Wikipedia



FIRST IMPRESSIONS

- Entryway clean of clutter
 - By city ordinance less than 50% of window may be covered.
- Clear of cigarette butts
- Literature of community business or bulletin board (no garage sales/lost dogs/benefits)
- Windows clean
- Swept and neat
- Business hours posted



TWILIGHT OR TRANSITION ZONE

- The first 15 feet - customers are acclimating themselves
- Place carts here
- Place shopping baskets here but also other places throughout the store
- Put your least profitable items in this area
- This is warehouse space
- Ensure you have a “wow” display to slow customers down



THE BEEF OF THE STORE



AT THE REGISTERS

- Should have space for customer's product
- Have nicely displayed impulse items
- All items should have pricing
- Literature kept at the register should be kept under control
- No more than two customers in line
- Third drawer open by 4 p.m.
- Help lift product out of cart and onto counter
- Event and promotional signage visible (Taped on or in sign holder)



RESTROOMS



- In convenience stores, 95% of customers will avoid a business with a dirty restroom.
- In the hospitality industry, 75% of customer will avoid a business with a dirty restroom.
- Retail is in between these two
- Should be kept clean
- Paper towels and toilet paper must be maintained and full
- Do not store paper products in bathroom



STORE ENERGY

(NO, WE'RE NOT TALKING LIGHT BULBS)

- What is emotional intelligence within a store?
 - The general work environment and how well employees work together
 - A team with good EI have a level of sales that are higher, portray optimism, remain level headed in crisis and adapt well to change
 - Being aware of emotions – understand strengths, weaknesses, behavior of yourself, team members and managers
 - Lack of EI can be an embarrassment to yourself and creates a negative image of the business
 - Positive EI improves employee retention and performance



OUR BIGGEST CUSTOMER SERVICE TOOL?



**IT'S YOU,
THE EMPLOYEES!**

COMMUNICATING WITH THE CUSTOMER - HOW?

- Verbal is 7% of communication
- Tone of voice is 38% of communication
- 55% of communication is through body language
- What you say is *less perceived* than how you present yourself to the customer
- Make eye contact
- Put a smile on your face
- Avoid dominant body gestures, such as hands in pockets or crossed arms
- Stand directly facing customer, don't allow eyes to become distracted
- Do not invade customer's personal space, especially with women



APPROACHING THE CUSTOMER

- How many believe a customer needs to be offered assistance within 10 feet of entering the store?
 - A customer needs to be greeted within 10 feet but should not be asked if they need assistance.
 - Still in transition, allow them to acclimate but let them know you are aware.
 - Check back with customer
- Opening Line, should it be “Hello, can I help you?”
 - “No.” Used by 60% of all customer service associates, it is one of the worse introductions you can have.
 - Ask the customer if they have been in the store before? Or what brings them in today? These responses have been proven to increase sales by 16%.
 - Introduce yourself and if the customer states that they just want to look, provide them some space. When you return they will see you as someone familiar and trustworthy.
 - If you recognize a customer, welcome them back and ask them what brings them back today? Better yet, if you know their name - use it!



Making the Sale

- Have you ever been in the grocery store to pick up a few items and find yourself trying to balance more than you can carry? How would it make you feel if someone approached and offered you a cart or basket?
- Always treat men and women as shoppers differently.
 - Women watch their budget
 - Aim higher than you would want them to purchase and then offer a second. They will typically choose the second more economical option.
 - Never offer more than two or three selections. They want to shop and get out to accomplish other errands.
 - Men are the keepers of their families
 - Always aim for higher prices and then place the bottle into their hands. As the keeper of their home they will be too proud to decline it or put it back.
 - Tell them what they need to entertain. They want the best for their guests but rarely know the necessities. If making Bloody Mary's, inform them that they need olives, bitters and rimming salt.
- Ensure you make customers aware of deals
 - If two 12 packs are cheaper than a case let them know. It shows you care!
 - Inform customers of case discounts and club membership discounts available.
 - Make the customers aware of upcoming sales, events and promotions.



CLOSING THE SALE

- Never ask the customer “Will this be all today?” or “Is there anything else?” They are already in line and it sounds as if they’re not spending enough.

Rather:

- Offer them ice, condiments or items that will complement their products.
- If you have time, don’t ask if they need assistance carrying it out - JUST DO IT!
- If you are busy, ask if they need assistance carrying out.
 - If they say yes - seek backup immediately.
 - If they say they can manage with the cart - inform them you will retrieve the cart as soon as your line is clear.

- Never turn your back on the customer
- Provide a genuine thank you or see you soon
- Know where your carts are!
 - Carts left behind on the sidewalk or parking lot makes it appear that we don’t have the time to properly service our customers or that we just don’t care.
 - As soon as possible, retrieve carts.



THE DARK SIDE OF LIQUOR

- Even when refusing a sale due to lack of identification or possible intoxication, customer service is necessary.
 - Lack of identification
 - Inform customer why you can not accept identification
 - Remain firm but polite
 - If they are upset, provide them a business card for store manager or director.
- Potential intoxication
 - Never inform a customer they are intoxicated or too “drunk.” Illnesses or medication can imitate intoxication.
 - Ask if they have been consuming alcohol
 - With either response, inform them that you are observing signs that they could possibly be under the influence
 - Remind them of the consequences we face for making a wrong decision
 - Never humiliate - be empathetic and inform them we would love to see them soon, but you cannot make the sale today.
 - If customer becomes belligerent, ask store management to assist you or contact police



It's not personal

It's the law!



Remember - you are first and sometimes the only contact our residents have with city employees. As our city representatives, the energy, professionalism and courtesy you provide the customer has the potential to be the overall impression a resident has of our local government and community.