

THE
MUNICIPAL
LIQUOR STORE

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MINNESOTA BEVERAGE ASSOCIATION
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Volume 73, Number 3, 2014



2014
Award Winners

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ON THE COVER

In order to provide industry / community recognition and an example for others to emulate, MMBA presented awards to members at the recent Regional Meetings.

Information on these award winners can be found in this issue.

In addition, Edina Liquor manager Steve Grausam was recently presented a *Friend of the Industry* award by the Minnesota Licensed Beverage Association (MLBA).

Steve was recognized for his work on Total Wine & More's entry into the Minnesota market.

Pictured on the cover are (l to r) MMBA executive director Paul Kaspszak, Steve Grausam, MLBA vice president Jennifer Schoenzeit and MLBA executive director Frank Ball.

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MMBA President's Message



Brenda Visnovac
President

Fostering Creativity in the Workplace

After telling people that I've worked for the City of Lakeville, and all within the Liquor Operation, for nearly 32 years, the question is always inevitably..... When do you get to retire?

Well let me start by clarifying that when one is qualified by PERA and when one is ready to enter that stage of their life, are two different answers. But my response is not a fiscal answer but rather an expectation of myself, and that is; I am planning on retiring when this job is no longer fun, and when I am no longer able to come up with creative ways to improve our business.

Does this mean as a manager I come up with all of the marketing concepts in the store? Heck no!! I have no copyright on the creativity within our operation, nor would I want it.

But it does mean that we, as managers, must create an environment where employees are fostered, encouraged and challenged to come up with refreshing and inviting concepts and ideas.

How do we go about that?

1. Create an environment that allows people to think outside the box. They need to feel the freedom to express new ideas and a stage or avenue to do so. These can include staff meetings or contests for creative thinking.
2. As managers, we are taught that as a leader it is our role to do the majority of the talking. But in a collaborative atmosphere,

it sometimes means we need to listen more than speak. And if we are going to provide input, do it in the form of a question and allow staff to come up with the details. This not only teaches them to think outside the box, but to problem solve and look at projects from different angles.

3. Be playful when fostering new ideas. It creates an environment that encourages risk taking, and no one is ever wrong if everyone is laughing.
4. Give them credit when credit is due. Recognize their abilities and reward them for a job well done!

Here are just a few examples of what has worked for us:

- For the Food Drive, we created a Food Drive Challenge video similar to the ALS Ice Challenge that we posted on Facebook. While we used our cable department to complete, it does not need to be that elaborate. This could have easily been captured with a smartphone.
- Sprit Beads: We take Mardi Gras beads and small rubber bands to hook three or four 50 ml bottles in a necklace format, which increases sales and provides customers great little gift giving ideas.
- Progressive Sales: Where the discount increases based off the number of items the customer purchases. We conduct two Progressive Wine Sales where if they buy two or three bottles they receive 15% off, four or five, they receive 20% and 6 or more they receive 25% off. (Make sure you review your pricing before this sale so the discounts aren't too deep)
- Bonus Barrel Savings: This is a promotion in which we review our

sales and collect all of those items we are discontinuing and place them in a barrel. If the customer spends \$100.00 in the store, they can choose any item out of the barrel for a dollar. Items range from \$5.00 to \$20.00. They pay you a dollar for the item, so in reality they are receiving a discount of 4 to 19% on a hundred dollar sale, depending on the item they select. This works very well on increasing incremental sales when customers are at the \$75-\$90 price range.

- We have also adapted MMBA Fund raisers in order to have them better suit the needs of our city. While we would have loved to participate with an animal shelter for the MMBA Animal Fundraiser, the city just doesn't have one within city limits. Rather than missing out on this opportunity promote our operation, we adapted the fundraiser to be called Kash for K-9's, with all proceeds being placed in a fund to pay for a new canine officer when the need arises.

These are just a handful of examples, as we try to include a creative promotion every month in order to remain fresh.

Remember..... All promotions and creative concepts are not perfect. You have to attempt to foresee all obstacles, but it's inevitable you will still hit a few bumps along the way. You keep creative concepts that have worked, tweak others, and throw some bombs out the window, which we have had our share.

In closing, while working on this article, I was looking for antonyms to "creative." They included inept, unproductive, uninspired, fruitless and old."

When I am the opposite of creative, that is the day I know I need to retire!

Hopefully it won't happen for a while yet!

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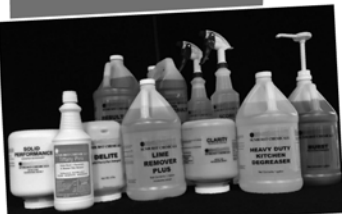
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2014 MMBA Best Business Development

WINNER: Litchfield

As sales increased and space and safety became an issue our city council approved a plan to set aside all profits after transfers into a building fund. By 2012 we had set aside over \$850,000.00 and the plans were drawn to be a replica of our City Hall, tying together these city buildings.

Our old store was 3200 sq. ft. and it was decided to set a goal to double the size for the new building.

We actually did a land swap with an owner of a lot 1 block north of the previous site. This new property had an old disreputable looking building with asbestos and mold, so it was up to the land owner to first properly remove the building and all mold and asbestos, leaving the lot ready to build. They took over our old building remodeling it for the use of two local businesses.

The new floor plan was decided with the best possible use of square footage and marketability of products.

The floor is polished cement and is very durable, beautiful, and easy to clean.

The cooler was expanded with an additional 5 doors, with enough space inside to hold a weeks' worth of product. Having all this product already in the cooler saves us time compared to the hours spent loading our old cooler.

We also have a small 3 door cooler located in the Wine area with chilled wine and mixes. This small cooler can one day easily be transformed into a beer cave if space for craft beer is needed.

The shelving was chosen for its sophisticated beauty and larger than our old store increasing space for 2 to 3 times more product on the shelf saving us hours of stock time.



The counter area was designed to be beautiful and add productivity by adding a third register which doubles as work station for office work, inventory, label printing and many other tasks as well. This was a valuable time saving solution.

Our back alley and garage door entrance for deliveries was our smartest idea compared to our old store where

the product was down stacked in our parking lot. Deliveries are now brought in on pallets and received in a more secure environment.

Many changes were made to update our technology to see us into future. Liquor store staff has expressed their satisfaction in these changes and it shows in their work.

On-Line Product Training

The need for increased staff product knowledge was a continuing topic at the MMBA Regional Meetings.

As a result, BEAM SUNTORY is offering access to their online based training program they use to educate their internal teams, local distributors and other accounts across the US.

It is called CONNECT and is the first and only trade engagement portal offering product education, resources, news, recipes, education and more!

A main component of the program are Category 101 Courses that focus on the basics of each spirits category (IE - What makes Bourbon a Bourbon, How is Vodka

Distilled, History of Categories, etc.).

Here is a list of the 101 Courses:

Bourbon
Canadian Whisky
Cognac
Craft Whiskey
Distilled Spirits
Irish Whisky
MIXXIT Training
Rum Scotch
Skinnygirl Wine
Tequila
Vodka

If you would like to participate in this exciting new opportunity, contact Colleen at BEAM SUNTORY:

Colleen.Herr@beamsuntory.com

2014 MMBA Community Involvement WINNER: Dawson



(l - r) Committee Members: Nichole Swenson, Marilee Jager, Garney Jager, Justin Jager

Dear MMBA,

For the past five years the Dawson Liquor store has held a Wine Tasting event with all the proceeds going towards a local non-profit organization.

Last year the J M Foundation was honored to be chosen as the fundraising organization.

We had a staff of 8 Working With Graney's committee of 4.

Together we put together a great event, We raised \$5,000!

This money was used to help create an Oncology Suite in our hospital.

Johnson Memorial Health Services is the only facility in our county to offer chemotherapy infusion services.

Our community really looks forward to this event; it provides them with an enjoyable opportunity to support our local non-profits.

We are very lucky to have Garney be so invested in our community.

Kristyn Wicht
Community Relations/Development

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2014 Commitment to Staff Development

WINNER: Edina



In February of 2013, Edina Liquor management team made the strategic decision that we needed to develop our brand and focus on our customer service. We wanted to make sure that our customers had not only positive associations with our brand but also that we had a competitively distinct position in their hearts and minds. To begin the process, we worked with Delaney Consulting to develop a customer survey.

The survey was designed to:

- Gauge the customer satisfaction level
- Understand awareness around profits going back to the community

From the survey, we concluded that there was definitely an opportunity to improve on our customer satisfaction ratings and to build our brand.

We hired an advertising agency, Hot Dish, to work with us to develop a competitive brand strategy and brand identity elements that would communicate our attributes and align with the image we wanted to convey. New way-finding signs, shelf tags and display tags improved the customer experience by making it easier to navigate the stores. Consistency in signage through all three stores also reinforced our brand.

Our competitive position, "Where Profits Get Poured Back into the Community," became even more important when we realized in May 2013 that Total Wine was planning to enter the market.

The results of the secret shopper portion of the survey demonstrated that we needed to develop customer service standards, engage more with our customers, and clean up the look of the stores.

As result, we worked with Flora Delaney from Delany Consulting and Jim Langemo from Langemo Consulting to develop our customer service training guide. Jim worked with the Edina Liquor management staff in developing the criteria for the GUEST Model.

The guide was designed to retrain all staff and to be used as a tool for any new hires. Two three-hour group trainings were conducted for full-time staff to better understand the training manual and GUEST model.

Each full-time employee spent a minimum of three hours worked one-on-one with Jim. Each store's management staff, in -turn, trained and coached their part-time staff.

Staff members learned about how they would be accountable for customer service and how to deliver on the best customer experience. Specifically,

not making assumption about what a customer can afford and to keep their periscopes up, meaning, to be on the look-out for customers entering the store and lingering in the aisles rather than focused on tasks at hand.

In addition, employees are observed by one of the supervisors or managers and given specific feedback on a regular basis. A GUEST observation form is completed by the coach and is a valuable tool in aiding the customer service coaching process.

Has this made a difference? Indeed.

One year later we repeated the mystery shopper exercise. The results were significant in that this time around 100 % o f o ur customers had been told " Thank You."

We also made significant improvement on our goal of greeting customers within 10 seconds of them entering the store.

Plus, the staff members have learned the proper way to upsell by using suggestive selling.

Are we perfect? Not yet.

Our next goal to achieve with thanking our customers is to thank them more specifically for support the community with their purchases.

Putting a focus on improving our brand image and our customer service with strategic planning, training, and coaching has already moved the success indicators in the direction we desire.

In addition, seeing this customer-focused behavior modeled by co-workers encourages new employees to follow suit.

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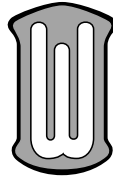


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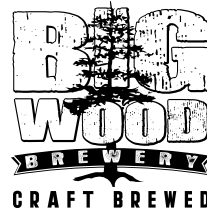
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Retail Lessons for Today, Learned from PBS' Mr. Selfridge

By Joe Cecere

It turns out that what was true 100 years ago in retail is still true today. Don't believe it? Check out Masterpiece Classic's *Mr. Selfridge*,

Across eight episodes chronicling the life and growth of Selfridge's department store on Oxford Street in London, any retailer worth their salt will see the parallels to today's challenges for retailers and e-tailers alike. It's all about experience, experience, experience — the customer's and the employee's.

A customer experience innovator from the get-go, Harry Gordon Selfridge spearheaded a retail revolution by anticipating shopper needs and desires before they could even tell him that's what they wanted.

Applying his formative years of experience working his way up the ladder at Marshall Field's in Chicago before striking out on his own in London, Selfridge's inventions included the first widespread use of customer delighters like the semi-annual sale, a bargain basement and the now-ubiquitous phrases, "The Customer Is Always Right" and "Only 10 shopping days until Christmas!"

Selfridge knew how to appeal to his target demographic — women. Before Selfridge's debuted the first in-store restaurant, the only place women could grab a nice cuppa in the afternoon was a local hotel. No other business provided women's powder rooms!

The revolution continued, as Selfridge truly democratized the shopping experience for all. His competitors' stores were specific to social classes, a hierarchy strictly enforced in 20th century British society. Selfridge broke down barriers by welcoming customers

from every walk of life, inventing the radical concept of "just browsing." Selfridge further harnessed the power of a differentiated customer experience by leveraging public relations and special events.

When the early aviator Louis Blériot became the first to fly his plane over water, Selfridge seized the day and put the plane on display in his store. It drew more than 150,000 people over four days, inspiring what the brand itself calls "the theater of retail."

But perhaps the real genius of this legendary commercial giant lay not in early advertising, marketing and PR acts, but with one of the biggest overlooked marketing assets not only then but also today: store employees. Selfridge enabled his customer revolution by turning employee relations on its head.

Prior to Selfridges, other store's employees were treated no better than domestic servants. Working 12+ hour days, workers lived in sparse dorms on-site.

Selfridge righted some of the immediate wrongs (allowing employees to live at home with higher salaries), while implementing a groundbreaking internal culture of customer service. Through his daily walks of the sales floor, all employees learned what Selfridges stood for and how the brand was changing the marketplace.

At Selfridges, they would simply "treat the customer right." Mr. Selfridge would reinforce the "what" and the "why" of the brand experience with every employee daily, while empowering his people to determine the "how."

Today, while Selfridges department store continues to flourish despite having struggled through two world wars, a

great depression, the eventual demise of its noble namesake and the sale of his enterprise, we are in the midst of another retail revolution of online and mobile e-tailing.

Marketers, strategists and merchants looking for innovative retail strategy can put down the business books, break out the popcorn, and enjoy retail 101 lessons while indulging in PBS' hit show.

The lessons they'll see?

First, invest in the customer experience.

What shopping experiences are currently accepted as "just the way things are," but could be more convenient or delightful for a customer? Don't just listen to what customers tell you they want; think 5-10 years further, then make it a reality.

Seamless experiences and omni-channel consistency are a base expectation of today's retail experience. To differentiate, you must meet those expectations and fly well beyond to earn ongoing customer attention and love.

And importantly, don't leave your employees out of the game.

Listen to Mr. Selfridge! Employees are your best marketing asset — your brand's first line of defense in a world full of shopping options.

Communicate your brand's purpose and strategy early and often, driving a thriving internal culture of allegiance to the end goal. Enlist and empower your employees to become your chief brand ambassadors, just as Mr. Selfridge did. Your bottom line will thank you for it.

What Do Wine Ratings Mean?

By David Devere , Duluth News Tribune

I'm sure you've noticed the little shelftalkers at the liquor store. These are the little tags that hang under the bottles on the shelves, and they say something like, "Rated 93 by Wine Spectator" or "Rated 91 by Robert Parker" - or something to that effect. These are very effective tools in marketing a wine.

I mean who wants to buy a wine rated 72? Everyone wants to buy a wine rated 93. Have you ever wondered how they come up with these points?

They use the five S's or some slight variation. Here's how it generally works.

To evaluate a wine in an impartial way, this means tasting something you're completely open to without prejudice, it is best to employ the five S's: see, swirl, sniff, sip and savor.

These form the procedure for scoring aroma, acidity, balance, complexity and finish.

See: The first thing you should do is look at the wine - hopefully, against a white backdrop in full light.

A romantic candlelight dinner isn't really bright enough to evaluate a wine, which should be brilliant. It should make you want to look at it again and again. It should have nice clarity of color specific to the varietal and style and shouldn't have anything floating in it and it shouldn't be cloudy. A wine isn't scored for "See" unless it's faulted, which often results in a failing grade.

Swirl: This isn't a category you score, it's a simple technique.

To do this, you need to have a good-sized wine glass, no more than 1/3 full, otherwise, your swirl will turn to spill. The reason you swirl is to introduce oxygen into the wine, which helps it release its aromas.

Remember, it has been sealed up inside a bottle possibly for years, and it needs some swirling action to help it relax. Until you get the hang of swirling a wine glass, I suggest placing the glass on a table then making small circles while holding the glass at the bottom of the stem. This will allow you to swirl without spilling.

Spilling is not one of the five S's.

Sniff: This is a very important step in evaluating wine because 80 percent of tasting is actually smelling.

All that swirling released the fine aromas of the wine, but you should still breathe deeply and take your time to try to discern the aromas.

It's not uncommon to have aromas such as grapefruit, apple and peach - to green pepper, honey and butter - to leather, cedar and pipe tobacco in a wine. So, take your time. If the wine smells great or exhibits multiple aromas, it should get a top score.

Sip: This isn't a gulp, it's a sip. But don't swallow too quickly.

Roll the wine around in your mouth, some say chew it. Your mouth is 98 degrees, and this will release heat-sensitive aromatic compounds and hopefully you'll get new sensations. Sip includes three score-able categories: acidity, balance and complexity.

Acidity is important because a wine needs it to balance out the inherent sugars. Balance is the play between sugar, acid, alcohol and in reds, tannins.

None of these should be overly prominent. Complexity is the sensation of interwoven flavors that make you want to take another taste. These three form the major basis of the wine's score.

Savor: This can also be known as finish. A wine sip should leave you with a pleasurable taste in your mouth. It shouldn't taste like metal or cheap perfume, and it shouldn't leave any lingering negative flavors in your mouth. If it ends well, it'll get a good score.

By giving each one of these items in the five S's a score of one to 10 for aroma, acidity, balance, complexity and finish, you should get a number from 5-50.

Add 50 to your number, and you've got a score from 55-100. That's how the famous wine critic Robert Parker does it and Wine Spectator Magazine follows something akin to this.

Now, that you know what they're looking for, try it yourself.

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Five Steps to Personalizing the In-Store Customer Experience

By Retail Customer Experience.com

Facing fierce competition and high operating expenses, today's retailers must develop new strategies for attracting consumers and building brand recognition.

Many are realizing the power of in-store merchandising and interactive kiosks to enhance customer loyalty and create a compelling consumer experience. Like silent salespeople, these visual merchandising techniques can foster brand awareness, impart

product knowledge and inspire consumer interaction.

"In store merchandising, kiosks and displays are appealing and can be real attention-getters when a consumer is looking for a specific product," said Joe Hoiey, Vice President of Business Development for Frank Mayer and Associates, Inc. "The right display can easily focus the consumer's attention on a single product category. That's hard to do in today's competitive marketplace, but if you create the right in-store experience it can be a slam dunk."

Given the three-second window of opportunity displays and kiosks have to compete for consumers' attention, many retailers are recognizing the importance of creating a personalized experience for consumers the moment they walk through the door. By catering to shoppers' varying preferences and personalities, retailers can increase profit margins, enhance customer loyalty, build brand awareness and level the playing field with online competitors.

Here are five steps to display project success.

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of current in-store displays

Retailers who rely on the same old in-store merchandising and POS displays risk falling into a rut. Today, sweeping changes in merchandising tools and technologies are under way. Staid stands gradually are being replaced with tablet PC displays, self-service kiosks and digital signage. Failure to keep up with these changes can result in lost sales, customer attrition and a tarnished brand.

That is why it is essential retailers carefully assess the effectiveness of

their current in-store displays. Are the displays customizable? Do they offer personalization? Are they delivering an effective return on investment?

Only by posing these questions, and measuring the performance of existing merchandising and POS strategies, can retailers continue to keep shoppers engaged in today's highly competitive marketplace.

2. Research new display options: POP displays, merchandising displays, digital signage, interactive kiosks

Like it or not, the rise of mobile and online commerce is presenting brick-and-mortar retailers with their fair share of challenges. Yet shoppers continue to seek out retail stores that have a diversified product assortment and offer a superior customer experience.

In fact, according to a recent Retail Industry Solutions Cognizant survey, four out of five purchases still are made in a physical store. The trick, however, is making sure that store is yours and not your competitors'.

To do so, retailers must research carefully today's growing assortment of display options. POP displays, store fixtures, digital signage and interactive kiosks are solutions that offer differing advantages.

Many of these choices provide a window into other sales channels, such as the Internet and social media, allowing shoppers to access outside resources while in-store.

3. Learn from success stories

Nothing speaks louder about the effectiveness of in-store merchandising

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and display solutions than success stories like Mizuno.

The sporting goods manufacturer turned to Frank Mayer and Associates, Inc. to find a unique way to display its wide assortment of sporting goods. The result: innovative, two-sided displays featuring modular components that merchandise multiple products and updatable graphic panels to accommodate a variety of golf wedges, baseball bats and running shoes.

For Mizuno, the modular rack not only showcased the retailer's products in an interactive fashion, but also "unified the Mizuno brand across all of our divisions," Cole said. "The solution was universally designed to accommodate any Mizuno product to ensure consistency of look and feel across all sports."

4. Ask questions of potential display providers

Behind every groundbreaking display solution is a transparent consultative partnership between a display provider and a retailer. While many retailers know what they want, they have a hard time defining what they need.

Asking a provider these questions can help clarify goals and lead to the best retail merchandising provider possible.

1. With the primary objectives of my project in mind, how can you help?

2. What look and feel can you create for the display?

(Review options, materials and installation requirements.)

3. What strategic decisions can you help me make in terms of where the unit will be placed, including environmental considerations and in-store traffic patterns?

4. How many units will be deployed and how quickly can you deploy them?

Thoughts on Pricing

Determining the proper price for a product is often more than just multiplying cost by a percentage.

Sure, MMBA has some basic mark-up guidelines, but there are many factors in determining which items should be sold at what price and when.

Pricing can be set to maximize profitability for each unit sold or from the market overall.

It can be used to defend an existing market from new entrants, to increase market share within a market or to enter a new market.

Businesses may benefit from lowering or raising prices, depending on the needs and behaviors of customers and clients in the particular market.

While discussing this topic at a recent MMBA board meeting, a director discussed a recent promotion utilizing a concept seen at many convenience stores --- whereby the discount was offered with the purchase of

two identical items, but the cost of a single item was more than half the promotional price.

So, a customer could buy two bottles of water for \$2.00, but if they only bought one bottle, it would cost \$1.39.

This concept is different than a large Twin Cities grocery chain, where two products are priced at a discount, but if only one is purchased, the price is half the promotional price.

So, a customer could buy two packages of cheese for \$4.00, but if they only bought one package, it would cost \$2.00.

One approach is not necessarily better than the other.

However, it is this type of thought process and consideration that is leading your humble executive director to do an extensive pricing seminar at the 2015 Annual Conference.

5. What size requirements can you recommend?

(Enlist a provider who is willing to measure the necessary footprint and varying parameters.)

6. How long will the display be in the field?

(Quality of materials differs among providers, so choose carefully.)

7. What products and how many of each will be displayed or merchandised?

(Sample a provider's offerings and how they can support varying weight and size requirements.)

8. What are the packing and shipping requirements?

(Some providers may insist on quick rollouts. While others encourage warehousing and shipping over a period of time.)

9. What are the installation and support requirements of the units?

(Inquire whether installation assistance will be required and at what cost.)

5. Implement and evaluate a new display strategy

There's no such thing as simply flipping a switch when it comes to establishing a successful merchandising or display program. Rather, the first step often involves creating a timeline that maps out the process of selecting a solution through implementing a full-fledged deployment.

"A timeline is critical to success," Holley said. "At first, a retailer might be concerned with store operations or marketing. But the reality is there are still set store dates that you have to hit. With a lot of big retailers, that's a huge challenge. Setting a realistic timeline for installation and deployment can establish a solid foundation for a project."

Once a timeline is established, retailers need to decide between a test phase or a full roll out and whether a display will be set up in one run or in split production runs.

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