**Retailer Newsletter**

**February 1, 2022**

**Tom’s Business “TIPS”**

***“To Improve Profits”***

**RE: Be Aware of Staff Burn-out!**

**Hello,**

**Most of us have never had to deal with the issues our businesses have faced and are still facing during the last two years as we have struggled with COVID, primarily supply and staff shortages. It has taken a toll on all of us, including store owners, managers, and CSRs. If you own multiple businesses, you may not be in close personal touch with the staff of each of your locations. Over the years I have personally witnessed ‘burnout’ in managers and CSRs. Burn-out is defined as *“a form of exhaustion caused by constantly feeling swamped. It is the result of excessive and prolonged emotional, physical, and mental stress”.* Now I grant you that could describe the owner’s day-to-day life at almost any given time. I lived that life for almost 30 years, and I know what I’m talking about. However, our employees do not have the same vested interest that we, as owners, do. Many of you may even call your managers and/or CSRs partners in your business, but (and this is a big BUT) many of them still feel like they are simply employees. They believe that if they quit their job today, they could find another one, without the stress they have working for you. Some of you may be saying to yourself, “So what?” Well, here is the ‘so what’; if you own/operate multiple, various businesses, do you have the staff to handle the loss of a manager, or two? When I owned my stores, I operated five full-facility service stations employing almost 100 people. If I lost a manager, I could fill in for him/her temporarily until I found a replacement. It would have been next to impossible to replace two managers simultaneously. Most of you are dealing with imperfect staffing at your stores now! Could you deal with the loss of two managers or a long-term CSR? I’m going to guess you cannot, at least not without some pain.**

**I have no easy solution for diagnosing burnout, but I do suggest you get close to your staff. You should allow them to vent their frustration. You should tell them, and more importantly SHOW THEM, how much you appreciate them. This could come in the form of a variety of ways. Such as:**

* **A pat on the back, both verbally and physically.**
* **Financial renumeration above and beyond what you are currently doing.**
* **Time off**
* **Work side-by-side with them for a period of time to walk in their shoes. They may now feel like you know what they are dealing with. This may even be an eye-opening experience for you.**
* **Assess what you might do to help eliminate or reduce their employee’s stress.**

**I realize some of you are reading this and think to yourself, “I don’t have time to babysit my managers. I’m paying them to run the store.” Or maybe you are saying, “I have been hoping they would quit anyway.” In some cases, that may be true, but if it is not, be forewarned. Be proactive and save yourself from the headaches that will come if you lose key staff or have inefficient managers/CSRs.**

**We have all been reading about ‘cashierless shopping’ or ‘checkout free’ lately. This trend is making its way into the convenience store channels. I recently had the opportunity to stop in at one of these major chain locations that was beginning this new adventure. In addition to cashierless shopping, this retailer was also highlighting their enhanced food service offerings and door dash/grub hub delivery service. This company has been in the news many times lately talking up their new acquisition strategy. I realize the company is spending big bucks on any and all of these upgrades; however, my recent experience turned me into a ‘one and done’ customer! By that I mean I visited the location one time, because I was looking for a restroom stop, and I will never, ever go back. Now you are probably asking yourself, what happened during my shopping experience. Here is a short overview of my experience:**

* **The trash can in the restroom was overflowing.**
* **There were no paper towels available.**
* **The toilet paper dispenser was almost empty.**
* **The soap dispenser was missing.**
* **The sink and toilet looked like they had not been scrubbed in months.**
* **The room did not appear or smell fresh and clean.**

**I was going to let the CSR know the restroom needed attention; but when I got to the front of the store, she was standing in the doorway smoking a cigarette and texting on her phone. I doubted if she was interested in the needs of the restroom. I also decided after walking out of the restroom with wet hands, I would not make a purchase, as I had originally intended. Now I have visited stores in this chain in the past, and I usually have trouble getting receipts from the dispenser and I have to go inside to get my receipt. It was apparent that too many of these locations lack proper supervision of the CSR’s and a formal ‘To Do’ list for staff members. I firmly believe all stores, big or small, 24 hour or not, must have a ‘To Do’ list for each shift to perform every day. You can find one on our website. It may not be perfect for all locations, but it is a starting place for you to adapt to your store(s).**

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**I believe the phenomenon of cashierless shopping is going to expand. However, in my opinion, leave this new adventure to the major chains and work on the issues that concerns the majority of your shoppers. I believe most of your customers are more interested in a clean store with good (GREAT) customer service. I believe the investment $$ in providing those two items will cost less and will very likely attract more customers. That to me is a bigger bang for your bucks.**

**I often receive phone calls and emails from readers of my newsletter asking if they can share it with friends and coworkers. I always tell them, “Yes”. If there is a friend or coworker you would like me to include in *‘Tom’s Tips’* simply send me the email address and I will be happy to include them in future mailings.**

**If your store is not as the profitable as you think it should be give us a call or email. If you are a supplier or organization with retailers, and they are struggling to maintain profitable stores, please reach out to us. We can help these stores operations and improve profitability!**

***"The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new."
 Socrates***

**Don't be a victim of the 5 Dangerous Words –**

***‘Maybe I’ll Do It Tomorrow’***

**Do it today because tomorrow (~~could be~~) will be too late!**

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