



Rethinking Retail

By John Stanley

One word can grow your sales: Don't forget that one of the objectives of any retailer is to convert more consumers into customers.

Even when times are more difficult, consumers will still go "window shopping". They may set out without any ideas on what or if they plan to purchase anything, but the chances are that they will not go home without purchasing something. Not everyone is extrovert enough to go window shopping, find something that appeals to them and purchase it straight away; some require a nudge to encourage them to make the final step. That's where the salesperson comes in.

Conversion is Part of the Game
Many salespeople in retailing don't believe that converting consumers into customers is part of their job description. As a result they "stand behind the counter" and wait for the customer to come to them. If we are honest, in many stores the counter becomes a physical barrier that often stops sales being made. The salesperson is often afraid to venture away from it.

Whenever it is possible and secure, Managers should encourage sales people to walk the store and interact with the consumer, the result can be a lift in sales. The role of the salesperson is "interaction" that can only be achieved if the consumer reacts positively with the salesperson, but how often do we lose those precious opportunities.

One Word is all it takes

Let's get back to basics; we often forget the basics and the difference it can make to the conversion of consumers.

Example One

Consumer walks around your store picking up products and is obviously interested in the range of products you sell.

The salesperson picks up the body language clues and approaches the consumer.

Salesperson "Hi, Can I help you?"

Consumer "No thank you, just looking"

The salesperson thinks they have done their job, but they have closed the sales opportunity down and the customer leaves the store disappointedly.

Example Two

The consumer again enters the store and walks the store in the same manner as in example one.

The salesperson again reads the clues, but this time remembers the magic word.

Salesperson "Hi, How can I help you?"

Consumer "Hi, I'm fascinated in these, can you tell me more about them?"

An open question was asked, a relationship formed, now a sales opportunity exists.

It is estimated that in the first example, 70% of consumers will use the "No thanks" reply if they are approached in this manner. If approached as in the second example the result will be that nearly everyone will start building a relationship with the salesperson.

If Salespeople are not converting, ask why?

As a store manager, it is one thing to correct your team in the way they approach consumers, but you have to ask why this is occurring. Is it they lack product knowledge and feel safer getting a closed response as they don't have to leave their comfort zone?

Is it they are not the type of people who should be on the shop floor, by nature they find it difficult to start a conversation with a stranger in the store.

Or is it, they are copying bad communication examples set by senior management who have got into bad habits themselves?

In some difficult retail trading periods, it is a lot more challenging to get consumers to your store. Once at the store it is critically

important that the conversion technique is as positive as possible. I was recently talking to a retailer who was saying that fewer customers coming into his store was the best thing that had happened to him. His team could spend more time on customer conversion; as a result his business was more profitable than when he had more customers walking in the door.

Go back to basics and RETHINK how your team are converting consumers into customers.

Convert Customers

1. Do an audit of how your team are approaching the "looker" consumers
2. Set a positive example yourself for your team
3. Train the team to always use positive "opener" statements
4. Monitor the growth in sales conversions to show the team the advantages
5. Make sure the team have the product knowledge and confidence to be excellent converters.

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About the Author

John Stanley is a conference speaker and retail consultant with over 20 years' experience in 15 countries. In 2012, he was awarded the WA Small Business exporter of the Year. He regularly contributes to retail magazines around the world and has co-authored several successful marketing and retail books including the bestseller *Just About Everything a Retail Manager Needs to Know* (obtainable from Amazon: ISBN-10: 0975011804/ ISBN-13: 978-0975011805).

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