

IDEAS

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INDEPENDENT RETAIL | TED ESCHLIMAN

COMPLETE THE SALE

It's 1997 and I'm handing a \$10 bill to the cashier to pay for my sandwich. As she places the change in my palm I politely thank her, she responds with a gentle, "No problem." Literalist I am, these words irritate me because in my mind, her only job is to give me correct change and by golly, I'm a customer, not a problem. Taking my money is pretty much her only assignment all day, but when I look into her soft brown eyes and see her smile, I immediately lighten up. Fleeting epiphany, I get it — her reflex reply had nothing to do with my "inconveniencing" her, even though that was exactly what her words implied.

"No problem?" Of course, no problem.

Sadly, it took me months to get over this recurring "no problem" catchphrase from most of the under 25 crowd. It's a street language thing, like hearing someone say, "To tell you the truth ..." does not imply "What I said before was a lie up to now." Still, words do mean things. In the poetry of exchange, they paint bigger pictures.

One universal phrase I'd like to change in the salesfloor vocabulary is the noun "add-on."



We strategize making the big sale and squeezing the customer for more accessories and peripherals; perhaps from their side of the counter, we are only out to pad our paychecks with bigger commissions. Staff should be trained on the positive impact of bolstering the sales ticket with more margin-rich components — we do add to our bottom line, and in most cases recover from a margin-strangling price on the big stuff.

There is a far nobler motive for loading up the final ticket and it's in the customer's interest. How about the notion of "completion?"

I signed up for the Dollar

Shave Club last fall. It's a convenient way to get quality men's razors, they mail me four razors every month with an initial free handle, automatically pinging my debit card \$4 when they do. The problem is when I travel, I have no protective cover for it. I fear inserting my bare knuckles against a blade in my kit, so I end up having to buy another disposable razor when I'm out of town. I've suggested they offer something to make this great shaving tool complete for me (no answer back yet), but it demonstrates my point. Avoiding involuntary blood donations, I would gladly pay extra for this tiny enriched shaving "activity."

ENVISIONING COMPLETORS

There are plenty of things in our store that remain to be "completed" for our customers, too. We need to evolve our own mindset from what we can "pad" to what necessary peripherals can we advise to make all activities associated with the purchase complete. The cash register ought to be where we sell culture, not just commodity.

Maybe this isn't a novel idea in your store's sales habitat. Better employees are hired not just

for knowledge and mercenary sales skills, but for their passion for taking excellent care of people. The paradigm shift here is to envision all the support items the store has to offer as "completors," and not simply "add-ons." The latter implies casual frill. The former motivates staff to think customer first.

Isn't a good case or bag essential for protecting a guitar in transit? How about a polish to keep that piano shiny? Wouldn't that Langenus Method book help the new owner of that new wood clarinet get even more mileage out of her instrument?

Many novice salespeople are afraid of being too pushy with suggesting more after the fragile victory of a "yes" decision. Yet, if the customer's ultimate well-being is the goal, there's no excuse other than laziness not to help the customer discover completors. If a sales employee is not concerned about helping the store to profit, let's at least harness him/her to authentically help the customer. **MI**

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