

# THE IN-STORE ADVANTAGE



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**"Let the improvement of yourself keep you so busy that you have no time to criticize others" » Roy T. Bennett**

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## Consistently Better

I had a pleasant conversation recently with a reporter working on an article about a northeastern bank that is having their entire organization – from CEO to teller – go through customer service training.

The twist to the story is that the training group hired works primarily with hotels.

One of his first questions was whether hiring a training group from another industry is unique.

## Off Key, On Point

I found myself smiling ear-to-ear this week as I heard my oldest son doing something I couldn't remember hearing him do.

He missed a note.

He's our music major, vocal-performance concentration, college grad son who has begun his career journey.

He has gotten professional work, but I've joked with banker groups that we'd like to help him avoid the starving part of "starving artist."

I shared that it actually wasn't, as I've known bank leaders who have used training programs of hospitality and theme park specialists over the last two decades.

And they usually spoke highly about them afterward.

And... most saw little impact on their customer service scores or sales results afterward.

Now, I know that the trainings were fine. Learning how successful companies from other industries deliver superior service can be educational and inspirational.

That's obviously helpful.

Taking that education and inspiration and doing something with it is another task altogether.

I stressed to him that the bank making a company wide commitment to improving customer service was something to be applauded.

The fact that everyone sees the resources being dedicated to improving service levels is in and of itself beneficial.

However, the true work begins after training.

Which practices are we modifying?

Which behaviors will we reinforcing?

What and how are we measuring whether we're improving and "moving the needle" where it matters.

Also, some organizations seem to miss a key point about establishing a reputation for service excellence.

A reputation is built as much on consistency as occasional exceptional interactions.

Companies with teams who provide inconsistent experiences do not foster trust in customers.

They may not leave you. But they will seldom, if ever, promote you to others.

I knew that "the arts" were competitive. And yet, witnessing the process with someone living in my home (for the time being) has been eye-opening.

The incident that had me smiling happened on a Saturday afternoon. My wife and I had been out of the house running errands separately. I had returned, but my son didn't realize it.

I then heard his wall-penetrating voice.

He sounded great, and then I heard him miss a note. It was a high note.

He's a natural bass singer and I'm not knowledgeable enough to know what range he was singing in. But... it wasn't his yet.

It was loud. It was clear. I know I could never produce that kind of volume. Neighborhood pets were likely looking out of their windows in awe.

But even to my unsophisticated ear, it was just a bit off.

He repeated it several times. He missed it each time.

When he came down later, I laughed and told him he had startled me when he went "all Broadway" up there.

He sheepishly said, "Ah, sorry. I didn't know anyone was home. Sorry you had to hear that."

I then told him it was the most motivational thing I'd heard in ages. That clearly puzzled him.

I explained that I'd seen him perform more times than I can remember. I've watched him perform in Carnegie Hall with a choir.

I've watched him play the lead in an opera, perform incredibly hard songs in plays, and spotlight solos at weddings and funerals.

I laughed and said, "I don't remember hearing you miss a note in 10 years. Glad to know you're not a machine."

He smiled, "Well, I sometimes miss notes when I'm trying to stretch my range."

Identifying and prioritizing areas of focus and establishing clear expectations are vital.

Telling a freshly motivated team to get out there and "be better" isn't a plan.

Increased observation and consistently gathering feedback from customers can help identify a bank's pain points and specific areas prime for the improvements that make a difference to customers.

Positive change is usually accomplished in small, repeatable steps.

What steps can you begin taking?

I replied, "We all do, buddy. We all do."

I then asked if he could miss that note again so I could use it for my new ringtone. He gave me a side-look, and then I explained that I'd better record it now, because I know he won't be missing it much longer.

He smiled and said, "You're right. I won't."

We all need to be willing to risk missing a few notes now and then to stretch ourselves.

Will you?

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**"When you walk in purpose, you collide with destiny." » Ralph Buchanan**

*Dave Martin, author of The In-Store Advantage, has become one of the most prolific writers in the banking industry. His keynote presentations, seminars, and podcasts have an authenticity and humor that brings teams of all sizes and seniority levels together.*

*For more info about having Dave or an FSI Consultant speak to your group, email Tina Coleman, [tcoleman@SupermarketBank.com](mailto:tcoleman@SupermarketBank.com) or call 800-992-4978.*

**Financial Supermarkets, Inc. • [fsi@supermarketbank.com](mailto:fsi@supermarketbank.com)**

383 Clarkesville Street • PO Box 1450 • Cornelia, GA 30531 • (800) 992-4978

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