

# THE IN-STORE ADVANTAGE



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Sunday, July 15, 2018

Volume 24 #556

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**"You will never reach your destination if you stop and throw stones at every dog that barks." »Winston Churchill**

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## Labor Panes



I was reminded last week of a joke an old friend made when describing his job to me.

He said, "I thought having a job in which I reported to the owner's kid was the worst thing ever...until they gave me a job with the owner's kid reporting to me."

We recently had a work crew in our home replacing our 30-year-old windows.

That is far from an easy process and involves workers breaking things (some intentional, some not) in just about every room in your home.

One of the crew had me reflecting on my friend's joke. I met the owner of the company before work began, and the crew he had onsite was stellar.

While the owner was not on the jobsite, the crew's work effort and the skills were impressive.

## Always Open for Service



I recently arrived at an airport earlier than I had planned for my flight home.

Walking by one of the ubiquitous "CNBC News Stores" at 6:45 AM, I was surprised it had not opened yet.

All surrounding stores and shops had.

Through the locked gate, I saw a funny t-shirt on a rack that would be perfect for a friend.

So, I sat nearby waiting for the store to open.

7:00 AM came and went without any activity in that store. I learned there was another store a few minutes further down the concourse and walked over.

As I searched the racks, the woman working there asked if she could help me.

And then, there was the 20-something-year-old, tank top-wearing dude.

He seemed to specialize in moving from place to place without doing anything. He'd begin picking up scraps but never finish.

He'd start taping windows but end up looking at his phone more than the window in front of him. Shards of glass remained on floors he was supposed to clean. Other guys tended to come up behind him to finish or fix whatever project he left undone.

When I heard a basketball bouncing in my backyard, I went outside to tell my son not to play while men were working with glass. It wasn't my son. Sure enough, it was tank top dude.

Going on a hunch, I smiled and asked one of the workers, "Is the guy playing ball instead of working related to the owner?"

He smiled and said, "You're paying attention, huh? Yeah...he's the owner's son... and my brother. I'd fire him if dad would let me."

Now, that had me laughing aloud.

He said, "I began working when the company started and things were tight. My brother doesn't know what it is to worry about having a job."

I shrugged and told him that my entire life was worrying about having a job.

While he was probably 20 years my junior, he said, "Our generation knows."

When I told her what I was looking for, she apologized and said that the closed store was the only one that carried that shirt.

I asked why the store was not open and she said, "Someone called in sick. We don't have anyone to open it."

I laughed a little and asked if she had a key to that store. She apologized and said, "Sir, I really don't. I don't know if anyone will be coming in later today with that key, but I doubt it."

I thanked her and began to walk away less-than-impressed with that chain's contingency plans.

Although smiling, I was a bit annoyed for having wasted 20 minutes on a t-shirt I couldn't get.

Before I was out of range, the woman called out, "Sir... I tell you what. I'd be happy to mail that shirt to you if you'd like."

I told her that it wouldn't be necessary, and she followed, "Well, we don't normally do that, but I feel terrible that you couldn't get the shirt you wanted. We just need to be better than that."

I politely declined and thanked her again.

She then wrote her email address on a piece of paper and told me that if I changed my mind to send her an email, and she would get a shirt mailed to me.

Her stepping up and taking ownership of the situation instantly changed my perceptions.

I'm not taking shots at "millennials." I've had experience with many folks throughout the years - from Boomers to Gen Z's - who seem to believe that being around work counts as actually doing work.

That mindset tends not to work out well for anyone around it.

Whether you're having a great day on the job today or a difficult one, will others be able to sense that you're grateful for the opportunity to do that job?

I went from considering them to be somewhat incompetent to being impressed by that employee's personal commitment to service, and I walked away smiling.

In the end, even though I didn't make the purchase I wanted, I felt pretty good about my visit.

Basic gestures of courtesy, empathy, and respect make customers (and potential customers) feel like they matter.

Strive to have your actions show customers how much they matter to you today.

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**"The best antidote I know for worry is work. The best cure for weariness is the challenge of helping someone who is even more tired. One of the great ironies of life is this: He or she who serves almost always benefits more than he or she who is served."**

**»Gordon B. Hinckley**

*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.*

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