

THE IN-STORE ADVANTAGE



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"Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy." » Thich Nhat Hanh

When You're Smiling

While joking around with an audience recently, I shared an observation that I hadn't in some time.

I was riffing a bit on how important the presence of smiles and laughter are in creating a high-retention workplace.

I further suggested that while I appreciate sincere smiles, I may actually respect fake ones even more.

That comment still draws chuckles and puzzled looks every time.

I suggested that anyone can flash a genuine smile when they're having a good day.

It's when someone is not feeling especially cheerful in the moment, but still manages to put a smile on their face, that you see a real pro at work.

Data Isn't Communication

I've been shopping for a new gas grill for several months. I noticed that one of the grates on my grill was cracked.

Looking closer, I found that the burners were also corroded. Sure, it still works.

But, I took my discovery as a great reason to begin looking for the next addition to the back patio.

Over the course of a few months, I researched new grills until I developed analysis paralysis.

After hours of online searches and watching videos, I haven't narrowed my choices much at all.

I simply can't decide on something as monumentally important as a new grill shopping online alone.

One of the funnier things I observe when I make that observation is that most in a room will smile and laugh when we simply speak about smiling and laughing.

It's akin to what happens when someone yawns in our presence. Before long, yawns begin spreading.

(Some are yawning right now after reading those last lines.)

Clowning aside, there is real science behind the impact of humor. Smiles and laughter trigger our bodies to release healthy endorphins.

Among other things, these endorphins increase the levels of oxygen in our blood and even improve the effectiveness of our immune systems.

Beyond that, smiles and laughter reduce harmful things like the serum levels of stress-induced cortisol in our blood.

Amazingly, the physical act of smiling – whether a sincere smile or even a fake one – tends to reduce heart rates and relieve stress.

While it tends to go unspoken, most fully recognize that there are some folks who simply help the days go by quicker. These tend to be individuals who are net generators of smiles and laughter.

It's unfortunate that so many have historically associated laughter with a lack of seriousness.

On the contrary, I suggest that leaders who are serious about team cohesiveness and morale should be keenly aware of the humor levels in their workplaces.

And while upbeat environments are always a competitive advantage, they may be even more so these days.

A challenging economy and labor force troubles have employees (and customers) more appreciative of humor and uplifting environments than ever.

Will you be generating smiles this week?

With that, I've visited most of the stores I know sell grills in our area.

On more than one occasion and in more than one location I have witnessed store employees (sometimes groups of them) standing around as I've examined grills. None has ever so much as asked if I needed assistance.

On more than one occasion, I suspect that even a little chat and personal interaction would have had me pulling out my wallet to close the deal.

It's had me wondering at what point did most retail employees lose any focus or interest in selling anything (or at least facilitating a sale).

While some would suggest that the labor force shortages we're experiencing is a factor, this scenario has seemed to be the case for some time.

And, I'm not blaming these employees. Folks tend to focus on what management asks them to.

Maybe none of these folks – at any of these stores – knows anything about the products they offer. You would hope that's not the case, but I suppose it's always a possibility.

That said, it's been a reminder that in a world of unlimited online information and nearly unlimited purchasing options, there is still tremendous weight in person-to-person communication.

There are always more folks than many realize open to considering better banking solutions.

Some are actively looking, while many more are interested... but not actively searching.

They have no shortage of information at their fingertips. That's not the problem. Information is abundant.

What isn't as abundant are bankers engaging and communicating with them in branches and out in their communities.

In an intensely competitive industry, one friendly conversation can make all the difference. How are you communicating today?

"Use your knowledge to ask questions, not to tell people what you know."

» Michael Oliver

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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