



June 2014 Client Newsletter

Dear Judi,

I want to share with you one of our recent blogs about the importance of first impressions, and an article about dress codes - because I think both really do make an impact.

Judi

FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE CRITICAL

It took 22 minutes. Twenty-two minutes from the time of standing in front of the cashier to completion of the sale. I was the only one in the store. I tried not to fume. These were, after all, a team of three hospital auxiliary *volunteers* trying to help me. I had wandered in off the street. I was not the normal customer to their gift shop-someone paying a visit to a sick person or a new mother up on other floors in this hospital. I had simply found the perfect birthday presents for my two daughters in this charming little shop. But, I wanted one of them in pink. The two clerks searched high and low for the inventory. Mary, the manager, was out of the shop at the moment. Perhaps she would know. Mary returned. Mary didn't know. They looked in their hand-written inventory book (basically a 3-ring binder). They fumbled with the hand-written price tags ("Is this a 'C' or a 'G', can you tell, Mavis?") Finally, the inventory book alleged that, somewhere in that store, there should have been seven more of these items, one of them in pink. Another search ensued. Five minutes. It turned up nothing.

"Never mind," I offered. "I'll just take that second purple one."

Then came the "ringing up" of all of my purchases. Two of this; two of that. Plus, two packs of gum and a tiny piece of chocolate Easter candy, heavily discounted on this post-Easter day. Two birthdaycards.

Each. One. Was. Tallied. By. Hand. Into that ledger book. Only THEN did the ringing up begin. The cashier punched in the number, consulted her book; punched in the number, consulted her book, etc. etc. etc.

It was clear the volunteers had not received adequate training for this job, and that communication among them was lacking. But more importantly, this gift shop in a hospital was not equipped with anything remotely resembling modern technology in terms of cash register, pricing, bar codes, inventory, etc.

After I recovered from the shock of it all, do you know what my first thought was?

"I wonder how their technology is in the surgical unit and emergency room."

First impressions. They matter.

By Chris Halvorson

Dress Codes and the UBS Debacle

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Restaurants, grocery stores and banks all have something in common - an employee dress code. Some companies, such as UBS in Sweden, have traditionally taken dress codes to higher levels. A 44-page guide for employees contains specific directives about employee nail care, glasses and even underwear. Recently, though, UBS announced that it will change its strict policies to more practical dress guidelines. While most companies don't manage company appearance down to such small details, many have some type of code in place, whether it includes wearing name tags or collared shirts, or directing employees not to wear jeans, nose rings or multiple earrings.

The challenge is to keep the dress codes current and practical. For some companies, dress code is rarely an issue. For others, employees complain frequently about the requirements. Dress code is part of company culture and the organization's brand appearance, and if employees feel the dress code is unfair or that management doesn't enforce the code uniformly among all employees, it can cause dissatisfaction.

So what should companies do? Here are few ideas to consider:

- Revisit dress code at least annually. Are some guidelines out of date?
- Find out what type of dress is right for your business from a customer experience standpoint. UBS was concerned about employee appearance because that organization wanted to present a confidence building image.
- If the dress code causes controversy often, consider conducting employee focus groups to gain opinions on acceptable dress. Use actual pictures to make decisions, since verbal descriptions can be hard to visualize. Or conduct an employee survey to gather more opinions.
- When rolling out a new dress code that you developed with employee input, communicate that you gained employee feedback before adopting the changes. Explain why the company is changing the dress policy. Include photos of acceptable and unacceptable dress.
- Explain dress code requirements in terms of customer experience and sales. "Our customers expect us to be conservative in style because we offer a conservation service, " or "Our customers expect us to appear hip and up-to-the-minute, based on the products we sell."
- Fully disclose dress code requirements as part of the hiring process. People tend to NOT want to work where they don't fit in. Be clear up front to avoid issues later.
- Measure employee appearance. Location visits by management can keep an eye on how employees present themselves. Mystery shoppers provide an unbiased view of employee adherence to dress code policy.

By Confero Inc.

Other Ways Some Clients Use Mystery Shopping Results:

An Extra Pair of Eyes for Managers

1) The owner of a retail store (13 locations) takes the reports to monthly staff meetings and reviews them with store managers. Problem areas that are identified become action items for individual managers (example: outside of store needs sweeping, signage not clear). Recognition is given for stores

running smoothly.

2) A General Manager of four locations worked with Customer Perspectives to create a form which enabled him to identify and correct procedural discrepancies (departments not adequately covered, returns handled improperly, telephone procedures not followed, etc.).

3) A regional manager sends reports to store managers and requests a written plan for improving weak areas.

4) Managers use the reports to identify the Employee-of-the-Month.

Upcoming Events:

The American Marketing Association - **Advanced Research Techniques Forum** on June 22-25 in Santa Fe, NM. For more information, [click here](#).

IIR's "**Shopper Insights in Action**" conference on July 14-16 in Chicago. For more information, [click here](#).

The International Quality and Productivity Center's **Market Research Exchange Conference** on June 22-4 in Texas. For more info, [click here](#).

The International Quality and Productivity Center's **Data Analytics for Financial Services Forum** on July 22-23 in Boston. For more info, [click here](#)

The International Quality and Productivity Center's **Leveraging Analytics for Customer and Business Value Creation Summit** on July 28-30 in San Francisco. For more info, [click here](#).

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