

Hopes for higher sales

“It looks great! Thanks a lot!”, exclaimed Mark Johnson as he hurried out of the graphic design store that was just four blocks from where he had been selling hot dogs, Italian sausage, and authentic Mexican tacos for the past year. He gripped the new, updated umbrella, and glancing at it, felt a surge of hope and determination as he briskly walked the gum-stained, busy, familiar sidewalks to his stand.

Mark Johnson’s office was of the open air variety, out on one of the busy thoroughfares where he had direct access to the thousands of pedestrians that used this route on their way to work, home, school, or to shop in the wide variety of stores in the neighborhood. Mark didn’t focus on where they were coming from or going; like the store owners, his concern was in convincing all of these people to buy his products and keep them coming back for more.

Talking with a satisfied customer leads to a solution

The past year (his first of the business) saw steady sales but he just wasn’t meeting the numbers he had set for himself (which were based on foot traffic for the area). He was at a loss as to why he was not selling as much as he should until one of his loyal customers inadvertently pointed out the problem.

One of the police officers that visited his stand on a daily basis had told him while wolfing down a few tacos, “You know Mark, it’s really amazing that more people don’t stop and eat these tacos. I mean I don’t eat here every day just because I like talking to you about the game. Really, these things are fantastic! I don’t know, maybe they just don’t see your stand? All these people seem to be in such a hurry that it’s like they don’t even notice each other. Well, I gotta go patrol. See ya around!”

“Glad you like the tacos and see you later”, said Mark before walking outside of his stand to take a closer look at the large umbrella that acted as both an awning and a sign. After a few minutes of inspection from all angles, the possible problem and solution for increasing his sales became as obvious as the flashing lights of a passing ambulance.

Although the umbrella that was meant to attract customers stood out very well when viewed from the front, the orange and blue colors seemed to blend in with the motley background of crisscrossing wires, traffic, and store-fronts across the street.

That same afternoon, he closed early to buy a large umbrella that was bright red and yellow and brought it to the “Graphics Are Us” store to have his logo and pictures of his wares painted onto to it. Fortunately, this new marketing strategy was ready in just two days and without any further ado, Mark quickly took down the old umbrella and with tentative hopes put up the new one.

Customer satisfaction

He exited his cart and inspected the bright, new umbrella from all angles. As Mark checked out his place of business, he couldn't help but smile to himself upon noticing that not only did the bright colors of the umbrella stand out better against the urban background, but they also made it easier to see his logo and products.

Very pleased, Mark got back into his stand, prepared the grill, and got ready for mid-morning customers. Not long after opening, a mother and daughter stopped at his stand and ordered two tacos. Mark quickly and expertly prepared this first order of the day and as with all of his customers offered them hot sauce, tried to upsell with sparkling water, and asked them if they liked their tacos.

The ladies each bought water and were very pleased with their orders although they seemed even more pleased that Mark had asked if they liked his product in a sincere and friendly manner. Before they left his stand, Mark gave each of them a flier that advertised his wares and as had become second practice to him, thanked them with a smile.

A busy lunch hour

As the lunch hour approached, Mark worked fast to get his supplies ready for quick, efficient service. He barely had time for a fifteen second breather when customers coming from both directions of the sidewalk placed their orders. He immediately got to work on their tacos when the next two customers asked for

hot dogs; one a tofu dog, and the other without onions.

Knowing how important it was to please the customer, Mark made sure that he took a mental note of these details but more importantly, wrote down the orders on the notepad that he kept to his right. He crossed each order off as it was delivered, always tried to upsell drinks, and made sure he gave them condiments and a flier.

Despite being very busy, he also still made an effort to ensure that his customers were pleased with their food and always thanked them with a smile. Mark took the effort to pay attention to such details because this was his strategy in **guaranteeing that every single customer was pleased with his products and service.**

He couldn't afford to not think this way because the growth and survival of his business depended upon it. Despite being very busy, he managed to keep up this strategy with each customer because he was absolutely prepared to sell as much as possible now and in the future.

Not only did Mark make sure that he could easily grab ingredients, condiments, and fliers, but he also mentally prepared and psyched himself before each lunch hour. He had found that an alert, positive state of mind made him work more efficiently, made the work more fun, and prepared him in dealing with unhappy customers.

Since the vast majority of customers were pleased with his products, he was pretty sure that the rare complaint about too many onions on a hot dog, or that the Italian sausage tasted bland was probably related to personal issues of those particular customers.

Nevertheless, he knew that no matter who the customers were, if they walked away satisfied, he was likely to sell more in the future and so he did his best to please every single customer even if it meant that he had to give them another hot dog, a coupon for a free Italian sausage on another day, or patiently listen to their complaints.

Better marketing and customer service pays off at the end of the day

As the day came to an end and Mark cleaned the grill, the police officer who was a regular stopped for his usual; two tacos with extra tomatoes. After munching down his snack, the officer said, "Hey, I noticed your new sign! You can definitely see it from way up the street! By the number of people that I saw at your stand this afternoon, it looks like they noticed it too!"

"Yeah, it looks like it worked! While you were eating your tacos, I took a quick count of my earnings and this is one of the best days I have had this past month! If this is a sign of things to come, I will probably have to hire someone to help me."

"I hope so Mark. Sincerely, you sell good, quick food, and seem to care about your customers".

"Thanks. I actually do care about them; I mean the way I look at it is that they are doing me the favor of buying my products and it's kind of like the better I treat them, the better they will treat me in terms of sales."