

The Head Heart Foot method

A never-fail checklist to meet your customer needs

by Jim Danahy

The best retailers know that every point of contact sends messages that either motivate or de-motivate customers.

The key is to remember that a whole person walks in that door each time a customer visits your store. Consider each customer's needs on three distinct levels of motivation – **Head**, **Heart** and **Foot**.

Head

ARE YOU OFFERING TANGIBLE BENEFITS?

“Head” messages are the primary reasons people come to your store. These messages take the form of products, services, location and décor. Success is easily measured since you offer these things or you don't. Do you have the right product assortment, convenient hours of operation, convenient location, lottery, ATM, etc.?

Remember the key to c-retail – think locally. Pick the right blend of these tangible benefits by paying close attention to needs specific to your neighbourhood. Invite special requests, try new ideas and constantly ask customers for feedback.

This level of motivation leads customers to choose your store the first time. While “Head” motivations are important, many have become the “price of admission” for c-retail. They are rarely unique and are easily copied by competitors.

Heart

ARE YOU AND YOUR STAFF SHOWING SINCERE CARE?

“Heart” messages bring customers back to your store...and keep them coming. They demonstrate that you're glad your customers chose you today, and you're keen to meet their needs. The magic (and the hardest part) is ensuring that every staff member



shows care to every customer, every time.

Do you greet each customer? Do you really listen to their needs? Are you courteous and friendly to teenage customers? Do you readily put down the broom or set aside the paperwork? Do you thank shoppers for their business...and show you mean it? (Even when you're having a bad day?)

This level of motivation brings customers back and keeps staff morale high. Sincerely rendered care can give you a lasting competitive advantage, especially in a retail sector not known for great service. Sam Walton, the founder of Wal-Mart, used care as his secret weapon against other discount retailers. Long before he had superior buying power, Walton hired people with good manners and caring attitudes. To this day, Wal-Mart is consistently judged to offer friendlier service than many upscale retailers. Care is the key to your reputation...and it costs you nothing!

Foot

ARE YOU INVITING THE CUSTOMER TO TAKE ACTION?

“Foot” messages ring the cash register. They “ask for the order” or prompt customer response. Special price points, displays, feature posters, ads and promotions all stimulate “Foot” motivations. Other kinds of foot messages include

simple questions like “Did we have everything you needed today?” Do you need a minute to think it over?” “Don't forget 6/49 is tonight!” “Would you like me to see if we can order that for you?”

This level of motivation has the most immediate effect, but use caution. “Foot” messages are often costly (reduced margin), rarely differentiate the retailer and are quickly copied by competitors. A common example of poorly used “Foot” motivations is auto dealers who trumpet “0%” financing with no linkage to the head or heart motivations. All three domestic auto makers have been offering 0%. The result is a costly stalemate with no lasting benefit to any competitor.

Use the Head Heart Foot checklist to test your store's performance at every point of customer contact.

Don't be fooled by customers who say they're interested only in price...yes, they may put heavier emphasis on dollars and cents, but they want it all!

Test every customer encounter by every staff member

Test your store décor and layout

Test your product and service mix

Test every promotional message

Make sure every activity delivers on all three levels of motivation.

Head

Did you offer tangible benefits?

Heart

Did you demonstrate sincere care?

Foot

Did you invite action by the customer? **YCM**

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