

Or Else, What?

By T. Scott Gross

“Anything else?”

“Will that be all?”

If you want to drive sharp managers right up the wall, stand them within earshot of a counterperson or waitperson who closes a transaction with either of those two phrases. Frankly, we don't sell “else”...and “all” is a detergent. So why would reasonably intelligent people use those words when taking an order?

Actually, there are several reasons why your employees use the weak and deadly short-cuts “else” and “all”.

Reason Number One: Lack of Time

Staring into a room of impatient customers can make even experienced servers weak at the knee. And facing a line of jostling lunch-time customers across a narrow counter can terrify a new hire. The natural reaction is to get ‘em in and get ‘em out.

Just because both you and your customers are in a hurry doesn't mean you can't sell. Here are some suggestions.

First, consider adding more help. A part-time server scheduled over rush periods could make you money through incremental sales. If you had time to sell the extras, there's a good chance that your profit potential would more than offset the additional labor expense. Besides, the extra attention you give your customers will have a long term positive impact on sales.

We discovered that learning-disabled persons can be hired at a reduced wage. They make terrific dining room attendants and free your regular staff to concentrate on the customer. When we owned our restaurant, our customers absolutely adored our learning-disabled dining room attendant.

Visual aids will also speed suggestion selling. If there's a bottle of wine on the table, it's easy to quickly hold it up and suggest the wine of the week (or hour depending on your class of clientele!) Table tents also work but only if they are clean, attractive and placed center table instead of being shoved to the side.

Counter operations are made for suggestion selling because counter help can continue to sell while ringing the order or filling the drinks.

Operators in quick service or concession operations often claim that they can't take time to sell. Nonsense! Sell while you're filling the order and you spend no more time at all. Since making change is a fixed amount of time, regardless of the size of the order, you can see that additional sales per transaction actually lowers your transaction time per sales dollar.

Put a pencil to it!

Reason Number Two: Lack of Skills

It's not enough to tell an employee to never, ever use the words “else” or “all”. You must give them something to substitute. You can shout “don't!” to stop a behavior but you must shout “do!” to start a new behavior.

An hour spent in an employee meeting can pay off handsomely if it is spent giving employees new selling skills. A few years ago we presented a suggestion selling seminar to a new client.

The meeting was held on a Saturday. On Sunday they reported their highest sales per transaction in six months. The increase was nearly 13% over the previous Sunday! Imagine what you could do, considering that you personally are available to reinforce the training on a daily basis.

On a side note, if you are not calculating your sales per transaction or check average on a daily basis, how could you possibly know how well you are or are not doing in suggestion selling? And if you don't tell your employees, how will they know?

Reason Number Three: No Reward

The old “what's-in-it-for-me?” rears its ugly head again.

Okay...so people tend to do things that benefit them directly. If you recognize that fact of life, you can use it to your benefit.

Tipped employees usually only need an occasional reminder that customers often calculate tips based on the amount of the check. It doesn't take rocket science to figure out that an extra topping or a dessert translates directly to the pocket.

Other operations may require a bit more creativity to pump up suggestion selling.

In our restaurant we were experiencing a slight case of "else" and "all". Customer counts were up so high that the crew was under extra pressure. So we pinned up five \$1 bills for each employee. Every time they were heard to say "else" or "all" it cost them a buck.

This contest lasted for the weekend. Then we started something more positive once the habit was broken.

Contest number two was a reward for the highest check average. You get the idea. Be creative.

**Reason Number Four:
No Examples**

Actually your employees have an example to follow. The problem is they may not be following a good example. Every owner, every manager should personally and regularly serve the customer. When presented with a visible, forceful example of excellent customer service and suggestion selling, your employees cannot help but to follow.

I haven't anything "else" to say.

That will be "all."

(The following is a suggested side bar.)

WHY
EMPLOYEES DON'T SELL

- * NO TIME
- * NO SKILLS
- * NO REWARD
- * NO EXAMPLE
