



By simply making sure the forecourt handheld devices are in working order, you will be helping your staff do their jobs and encouraging customers back to your site.

By JOCELYN DALY

I have a Total service station just around the corner from where I live. On three occasions I have driven off the driveway as there were no staff to be seen anywhere on the forecourt.

Painful payment

Anyway, a week or two back when I had a bit of time on my hands, I decided to try and get attended once more.

The forecourt attendant filled my fuel tank and then when I presented him with my debit card he said I had to go inside to pay. I asked him why and he said that their handheld devices had stopped working ages ago but they were not fixed yet.

I asked for the pump number and started walking into the shop. The pump attendant followed me, so I told him not to worry, he can go and serve another customer and I will pay at the till. Guess what his response to me was? "We have to stay with the customer to make sure that they do pay!"

So here we were in a queue with about five customers in front of me – all of them also with a forecourt attendant in tow.

No wonder there was never any staff on the forecourt, they were always standing in a line inside the shop to make sure the customers did not drive off without paying.

Now how stupid is that? Just get the handheld devices fixed for goodness sake!

The customer in front of me said the owner of the service station lives far away and hardly visits the site. The handheld devices he said had been broken for a good few months and nothing gets done about it. Needless to say, I have not been back there.

One more thing about handheld devices in general, especially those on most forecourts – they are absolutely filthy! Why can't we use the same sort of clean wipes we find in our supermarkets for trolley handles? The device can be wiped clean prior to each transaction. Really simple to get it right and it would leave a lasting impression for your customers.

It clearly shows that you care about them.

Coffee queries

I have also found inconsistencies in the coffee offering of the same franchise – in the same building. Both are housed at Lanseria airport – one is before you enter the security section and one is just before you board the plane.

The coffee dished up outside the security section is vile. I have tried it a few times now and it remains awful. On the other hand the coffee served inside the boarding lounge is great – well it was, until a few weeks back.

On my last visit through this airport, I went straight to the boarding lounge expecting to have a great coffee after a long day at work. It was awful. So I asked to see the manager. When I told her about my experiences outside compared to hers, she immediately said that this is what most customers tell her.

I then told her I was very disappointed with my coffee that day and she explained to me that their coffee grinder had broken and was in for repairs – so they had to get their coffee ground at the other coffee shop. Suddenly it all made sense – the difference was in the grind of the coffee! As simple as that.

And the worst thing about it all was that management were fully aware of the discrepancy between the two offerings – and did nothing about it!

And so to my question in this issue: Do your staff have the right equipment to do their jobs properly? When something breaks, have you got a back-up plan? When last did you personally inspect your equipment? How do you know it is all working as it should be if you don't inspect it?

Don't wait for a customer to complain before you check your equipment – inspect it personally and see it as part of your job on the site all of the time.

The devil is in the detail – make small changes to the way you do business today.



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