


42 Great Ideas to "WOW" Your Customers

By Rich Kizer & Georganne Bender

We live in an instant gratification world – we all want it now. We're all time-starved, with too many things on our "to do" lists. You want to improve your store, you need to improve your store, it's just that you're so busy. We understand. That's why this month we're going to help you keep it simple with our 42 Great Ideas to WOW Your Customers. Why 42? Because most people expect a nice round number, like say 50, so we decided to throw you a curve ball. So, rip out this article and put it in a place where you'll be sure to see it every morning, and get ready to WOW!

GREAT SERVICE BEGINS WITH THE BOSS

1. **Walk through the store** each day before you open for business. Take a pad of paper and a pen and note what needs to be fixed before you open.
2. Schedule yourself to **work at the customer service counter**, checkout counter, stock shelves, and clean the bathrooms. Once a month is okay, once a week is better.
3. Spend a day a month personally conducting exit interviews to **find out why customers leave your store empty handed**.
4. Make sure that all associates look and act like professionals. Write, explain, and **reinforce your dress code** policy. No more sloppy jeans or visible undergarments, thank you very much.
5. **Continue your education**. Attend business seminars at the trade shows you go to each year. Become a graduate of



Automobile University: pick up the audio cassettes or CDs of the classes you miss, and listen to them on your way to work. HIA has a great selection, to purchase tapes contact them at (201) 794-1133.

ON THE OUTSIDE, LOOKING IN

6. **Check the bulbs** in your exterior signage every day to make sure all are in working order.
7. The store front needs to sparkle and sizzle with excitement! Windows need to be clean. Window displays, and/or product visible, **the windows should be exciting to look at**, and well merchandised.
8. Add a ramp to the front of your store. Disabled customers, moms with strollers, and scrapbookers with wheeled totes will be **eternally grateful**.

INSIDE THE STORE

9. Station a Greeter, ala Wal-Mart, in your Decompression Zone on busy days. **The mere presence of the greeter will delight most customers**. The greeter can offer a cart or a basket, or tell customers about in-store goings-on they won't want to miss.
10. In America, 99 percent of customers enter a store and turn to the right. This makes the area just inside the store, and to the right, an important merchandising area. **The wall at the front right is key as well, it's called a Power Wall**. Use this highly visible space to showcase new items, tell product stories, and to display high demand, high profit items. You may even

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want to use this area for demonstrations and make-it/take-its during events and other high traffic times.

11. Place Merchandise Outposts – displays of product near the aisles – to **entice customers to pick up product on impulse**. Use Outposts throughout your store to cross merchandise; to introduce new merchandise; and to feature highly profitable merchandise.

12. Create a monthly End Feature Planning Calendar. End features are high impulse areas that need to be merchandised with current items that are related to adjacent merchandise. They must also be well-signed. NEVER use end features as miscellaneous catch-alls.

13. Keep shopping carts clean and in good repair. When it's raining or snowing, dry them off before allowing customers to use them. **Clean the carts in front of customers** – it reminds them that the little things are important to you.

14. Encourage associates to help separate carts for customers. It's a nice gesture for most; **it's imperative for older customers.**

15. If you see a customer shopping with merchandise in his/her hands, get them a cart. Customers will spend 25% more, and stay up to 15 minutes longer, when they can shop "hands free."

16. Enlarge the font size on signing, and on price tickets, so customers can easily read them.

17. Offer free call-in service to answer customers' questions about product and projects. Advertise this – **make it a big deal!** Continuously let customers know you are there to help them when they need you.

IN-STORE COMMUNICATION

18. Take your store blueprint (or create one on your computer if you don't have one) to a copy shop and blow it up to poster size. **Make several copies, and**

place them in a sign holders near the shopping carts or baskets, and in key places throughout the store.

19. Hang this week's ad or circular on a bulletin board, or in a sign holder, near the front of the store for customers who may have missed them. Have extra copies on hand for customers to take with them while they shop.

20. Make a list of this week's sale items and place the list in brochure holders throughout the store. Keep copies at each checkout as well.

21. If you run a coupon sale make sure that you have extras at each checkout for customers who don't have them. **You want to lose a customer?** Tell her she can't have the coupon everyone else has.

22. Hold daily meetings so that associates know what's going on in the store. If you can't do a meeting, then make a daily "Pre-Opening Checklist" of things associates need to know and post it near the time clock.

CUSTOMER CARE

23. Answer the telephone within three rings. **And have a specific store greeting everyone must use.**

24. Keep the Customer Service Counter, and the area behind it, clean and neat at all times. If you have a sign that reads "Ring bell for service", add one word to make it customer-friendly: **"Ring bell for quicker service."**

25. The associates working the Customer Service Counter must be the happiest, and most eager-to-help people that you have on staff. How they handle the transaction often determines what customers tell their friends about your store.

26. Make greeting every customer a non-negotiable store policy. Acknowledge every customer you see in the store – if you come within seven

feet. **Smile and say hello.**

27. Always apologize if the store has made a mistake, has inconvenienced a customer, or if a product is defective. Even if it's not your fault. Then fix the problem. **The customer will remember that her problem – and her feelings – were important to you.**

28. Personally respond to every customer who takes the time to offer a suggestion to help the store, or to complain about something that they didn't like.

SPECIAL SERVICES

29. Offer "Curb Service" for those customers who cannot easily leave their cars. Customers call in advance, you handle the transaction over the telephone, and when the customer pulls up, you take the product to them. This is a wonderful service for disabled customers, elderly customers, and new parents.

30. Feature your willingness to special order items, and brag about the speed of delivery.

31. Offer to check customers packages while they shop, and **offer to check their coats in the winter.**

32. Keep a basket of umbrellas for customers to use to load their cars when it's raining.

THE CHECKOUT COUNTER

33. Your checkout counters must provide enough space for customers to comfortably complete their transaction. Do you offer enough space for merchandise and the customer's personal items?

34. Stock your checkouts with fun items customers will pick up on impulse; "inexpensive child-safe toys mom can buy to keep the kids quiet; and those items customers most frequently forget.

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35. The space behind your checkouts is selling space. **Create displays that keep customers constantly thinking** about the merchandise that you sell in your store.

36. Create a special checkout area

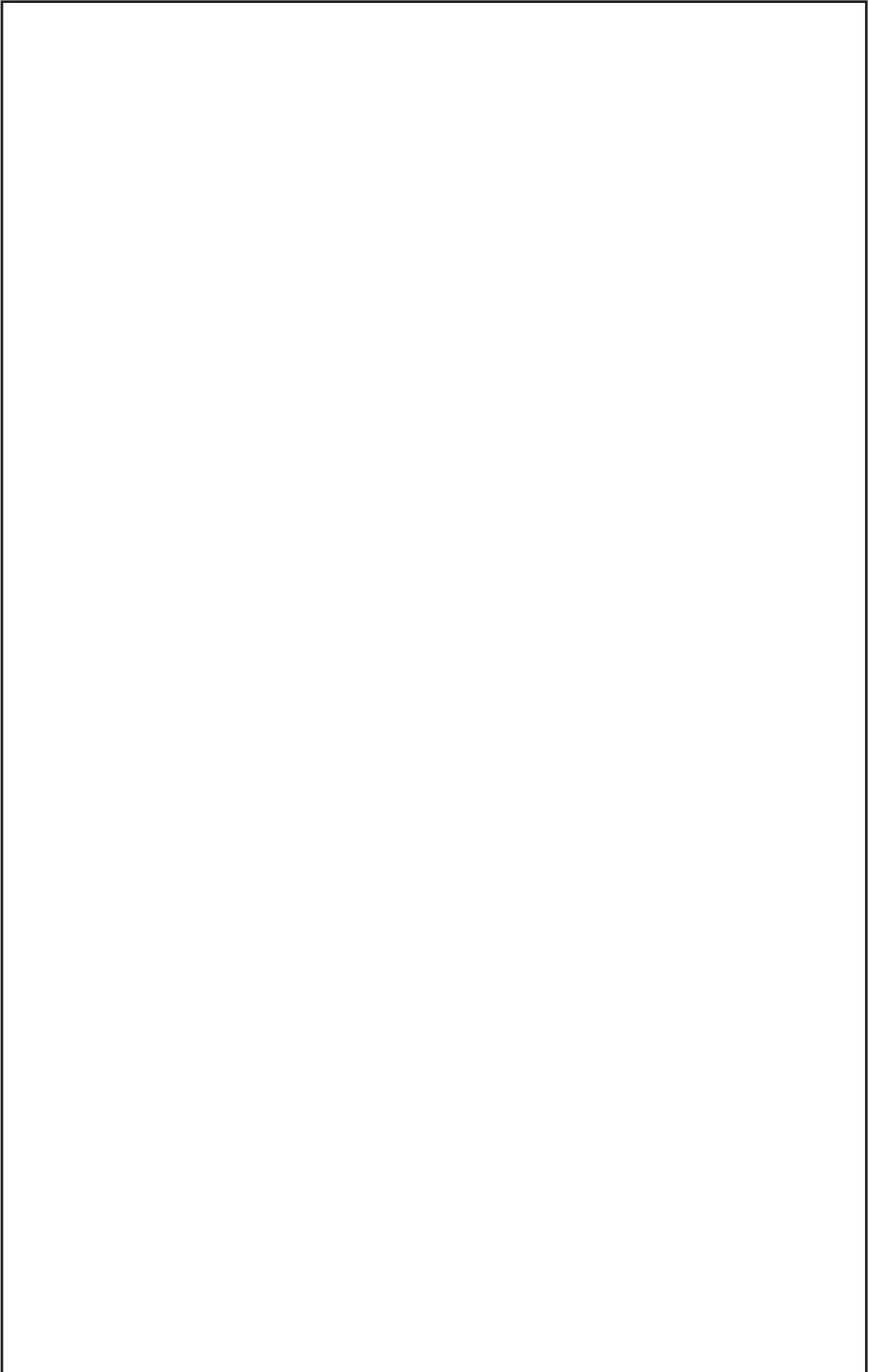
for professional crafters, teachers, and others who receive discounts most customers do not receive.

37. Detail the regular price as well as sale price on the customer's receipt.

38. Turn the cash register screen

around so customers can see it.

39. Have your cashiers on a "Wait Line" – standing in front of their checkout waiting to welcome customers to the checkout. **They can also help unload the customer's cart before ringing the sale.**



GETTING THE WORD OUT

40. Create a weekly Bag Stuffer that **tells customers about something important** that is – or will be happening – in the store. Have each cashier personally hand one to every customer.

41. Create an advertising campaign that you can play over the store's intercom system. You can use it when customers are placed on-hold as well.

42. Collect customer testimonials for uses in all of your advertising, brochures, and newsletters, on your website, and in-store signing.

To make it even easier for you to WOW your customers, we have a whole bunch of templates to help you out. To get yours, simply drop us an e-mail with the word "WOW" in the subject line, and get ready to shake things up! ◆