



STARS Newsletter

South Texas Association of Resale Shops
visit us at: www.starsresale.com

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Mark Your Calendars



June 23-26, 2006

Annual Conference of the National Association of Resale and Thrift Shops (NARTS) in Atlanta, Ga. www.narts.org

September 2006

2nd printing of the Official *STARS* Directory

October 2006

STARS annual meeting TBA

March 2007

1st printing of the *STARS* Official Directory

What To Do About Summertime Blues

It is hard to believe the year is already half over and we are into the month of June, traditionally one of the slowest months of the year. What to do? First of all, keep excitement going. **Pull out your favorite tricks to keep customers coming back.** My favorite trick is to offer something "free."

Here in Texas, who doesn't like a cold drink of water? Have small bottles of water available to offer to customers who shop in the store. Let VIP customers know they can come in and ask for a bottle anytime. They will never fail to look around once in the door! Offer a free pair of earrings with a purchase over \$25 (for example) or more. How about free stuff for the kids? Balloons for the good guys? Give seniors get a 10% discount every day or on certain days. Throw a big sales event to get rid of summer merchandise, don't wait until July or August. Other ways to create excitement: Move stuff around and keep displays fresh. Try something different in the windows. Take more time talking to the customers. And most important of all: Keep a positive attitude even if you are having the worst day in weeks!

Your Editor,
Pat Swartley

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About STARS...

The *STARS* Newsletter is published bi-monthly 6 times a year for Feb/Mar, April/May, June/July, Aug/Sept, Oct/Nov and Dec/Jan and is mailed to *STARS* members, prospective members, *STAR*lets and other interested persons.

STARS was founded in 1991 to promote education, networking, mentoring and co-op advertising among member for-profit resale shops.

Membership in *STARS* is open to any for-profit resale shop in business for 1 year or more in the Greater Houston area. 2006 Membership dues are \$50 per year and new members are accepted at any time. *STAR*let provisional membership is offered to new resale shops in business less than 1 year. *STAR*lets enjoy most benefits of membership for free.

STAR membership provides the opportunity to have a listing on the *STARS* website, www.starsresale.com. You may also place a website link for a one time fee of \$50. Contact *STARS* at 713-789-6456.

The bi-annual Official *STARS* Directory is published in March and September. For information please call publisher, Jacke Shipwash at 1-409-927-1295.

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Advertising is accepted.
Members may advertise
in a classified section free.

Letter from the editor

Keep one idea in mind: resale IS retail. In other words, you should run your business as professionally as a retail business. It starts with how you answer the phone, how you deliver customer service, and how you train your employees and it includes how you merchandise the store, and do displays. Throw out hand-made signs, and check employee attire. How they dress should be a reflection on your store, just like retail.

You have a “real” store. Once, one of my daughters wanted to quit and go to the mall to work in a “real” store. I couldn’t believe she said that. In her mind the Clothes Basket wasn’t a real store. (In her new retail job she worked until 10 PM and was paid less per hour, but in her mind she had arrived!) I became motivated, however, to study every aspect of my business to make it as “real” as possible. **The more “real” you are the more confidence your customers will have toward your business.**

Embrace change. Just look around you—there is constant change going on in every business. Restaurants are always offering new food choices, and stores are offering more inventive sales incentives, new products and better customer service options. To stay in the game and draw customers you have to do the same. **Look for opportunities to introduce change in your product selection or store policies.**

On page 4 is an article about complaining customers and how to treat them. Just a few tips can help you deal with that distressful situation. I mention how one irate customer was so over the top, and out of control, the customers shopping in the store left! (I had an employee call my husband and when the customer finally left I locked the door.) **What was the problem? I had turned down her clothes!** Granted, this woman had issues before she walked in the door, and I probably would have never had another consignor flip like her, but I took the time to review every aspect of my consignment take in-policy with my employees and we made some changes to make the process even more consignor sensitive.

Finally, let your mind be a sponge to soak up new ideas, because the learning never stops, folks! That’s the fun of resale and don’t you forget it!

Pat Swartley



NEW TRENDS IN RETAIL— HOW WILL IT AFFECT YOU?

Article from Houston Chronicle, on May 6, 2006. Title: “Stores Dancing Chic to Chic” by David Kaplan.

“More and more mid-range department stores and big-box discounters are selling the type of merchandise once found primarily in upscale retail stores.” Reason? They want to draw more “deep pocket” customers into their stores. Even Wal-Mart isn’t satisfied to have the corner on the budget-minded customer and is offering low-priced goods as well as upscale products for the affluent customer. Notice their recent TV ads showing trendy clothes now available in their stores. Now its price AND style as they move into today’s competitive retail atmosphere.

Most of the major mid-range department stores have added luxury private label product lines for home accessories, clothing, cosmetics or jewelry or electronics to attract customers who do not have to worry about gas prices or utility bills. The idea now is to offer something for “everyone”, not a move toward upscale. The trend is further defined as “broadening the styles and prices” to “enhance the overall image as a place that sells quality merchandise.” **Changing inventory and offering new products always creates excitement and new customers.**

How is this information important to resale shops? First of all, we must define our customer base. If you have catered to the budget-minded customer only, that customer is struggling right now and sales will drop. Even dollar stores are posting weaker sales, the article noted. To survive it is important to also find a way to draw the more affluent customer. What new product lines can you add? How do you get the word out? Our more upscale resale shops selling designer brand merchandise should do well because luxury items have been hot sellers for years. Yet, if sales are not good, it is time to consider adding some product brands from the mid-range retail stores. **Learn from today’s retail trend and offer something for everyone.**

The Sweetest Sound in Any Language—Your Name!

Do you have trouble remembering names? Read these tips on how to solve that problem:

According to Peggy Morrow, it takes at least 20 seconds for a name to “set” in your memory bank, therefore; it pays to engage in conversation with the new person for at least that long or longer. This is why when you are introduced around the table, for example, you can barely remember anyone’s name later.

It is very important to get the name right in the first place. Do not let your mind think of what you have to do next or let it wander. When you engage the new person in conversation, try to repeat their name several times. Can you associate their name with someone or something? I once had a friend approach me at a party and say he had met this lady across the room, but he couldn’t remember her name—could I help him? I bet he felt really dumb when I told him the lady had **his** last name—and **my** first name! Does the person have a name that is familiar such as the name of a family member or best friend? “Glad to meet you, my sister’s name is Carol!” Perhaps a very unusual name can be broken down into syllables.

For long term memory of a person you need to associate the name with a face or some physical feature, or perhaps a particular place or incident that occurred around the time you met. “Hello Susan (with the beautiful red hair), remember me? We met at the Chamber Coffee.” You pay someone a subtle and very effective compliment when you can recall their name. They especially like it if you haven’t seen them in a long time!

Being able to remember loyal customers’ names is a prime asset in your business and will go a long way in keeping them loyal.



DO YOU HAVE COMPLAINING CUSTOMERS?

Here are some tips to help you handle a difficult, demanding customer by Peggy Morrow, well-known marketing expert. Visit her website at www.peggymorrow.com

Peggy says the most important element in dealing with an unhappy customer is that you have to “fix the person first” and then “fix the problem.” Her well-taken point is: the customer needs to vent before you offer a solution to the problem. “Be sure to ‘let ‘em blow!’” she says, “This means let them state what is making them unhappy. Don’t interrupt and make excuses or give reasons” why your company failed to give good customer service. It is also important that you distance yourself from the dialogue and not take the complaint personally.

Often the only thing a customer really wants is a chance to be heard and to be told that you are as upset as they are about the problem they encountered at your business...During this process be sure to keep good eye contact and really listen. Give them your undivided attention.” Please do not ring up another customer’s sale while listening! When the customer calms down ask, “Is there anything else?” “Be sure to get all of the details...until they have sputtered out.” Then offer a solution to the problem.

Editors note:

Sometimes there is no solution to the problem. The items they left for consignment two years ago are gone and they go away mad.

When faced with an unsolvable problem it may help to say, with all sincerity, “**I am so sorry. How can I make you a satisfied customer?**” This statement can soften the anger and help the customer forgive because you showed you cared. Sometimes the customer will then begin to take the blame for the problem: “That’s alright, dear, you don’t have to do anything. I should have come in sooner, I guess.”

Think of a situation in which you were really upset with a business. Think how they handled the complaint. Did they make you satisfied? What can you learn from the experience? I once sat in the office of the manager of a service department where I had taken my car. I was livid about some issue regarding the service to my car. I was so mad I came THAT close to insulting the manager and calling the establishment crooked. And I was just warming up!

The madder I got the calmer the manager got. His manner and body language showed he was sorry I was upset, he wanted to know exactly why I was upset, and he wanted to fix the problem. He asked questions. I began to marvel how he kept his cool in spite of the haranguing I was giving him. He continued to look at me directly with compassion on his face inspite of my anger. It was obvious he didn’t take the complaint personally. In fact, I became so impressed by his composure that I calmed down and began to speak in a normal voice.

When I finally shut up, (he had let me say all I wanted to say without interrupting), he presented a summary of my complaint and an immediate solution that I thought was more than fair. We shook hands and I left a very satisfied customer with every intention of returning the next time I needed service. Before I left, though, I turned to him and thanked him for his professional manner in handling my complaint and I apologized for my behavior. I also knew that he had made an impression on me I would never forget. (*article continued on page 5*)



Welcome New Member

Riverbridge Resale and Consignment

6390 Highway 105 W.
Conroe, Texas 77304
Phone: 936.756.5020
Email: riverbridge@consolidated.net

Owners, Danny and Kay George, have been in business only a few years and are members of NARTS. They operate a used furniture, home décor, collectibles and antique store.

(continued from page 4)

Did you notice he followed all the tips Peggy Morrow presented?

Although this happened a long time ago, I still remember being treated with respect, even though I wasn't giving any respect, and my problem was resolved in an efficient and fair manner. It taught me that when faced with an angry customer, staying as calm as you can is the best way to go. Allowing the customer to make you angry or upset only makes matters worst.

One of the unique problems we have in resale shops is there is no place for the customer to vent except on the sales floor, or only one person is on duty and the customer can't be asked to step into an office or back room. I have been in a situation where the customer had to vent on the sales floor and by the time she got finished every customer had left the building! Another time, the customers stayed and when the dissatisfied customer finally left they rushed over to compliment me on how I had handled her. **The best choice of all is to be able to get the customer off the floor and into an office or back room, if possible.**

Welcome New STARlets

Merry-Go-Round

3039 Woodland Hills Dr.
Kingwood, TX 77339
Phone: 281.359.7580

Owner, Suzanne Juel, sells children's clothing, baby gear, cribs and bedding.

The Perfect Piece

16888 Highway 3 (near Bay Area Blvd.)
Webster, TX 77598
Phone: 281.554.8888

Owner, Adam Weinman, plans to open in June 2006 and will sell furniture, rugs, lighting and accessories. We welcome him to the SE, Bay Area community. His business is unique in the area.

Another Tip From Peggy Morrow:

Time Management Idea: "Eliminate wasted time in the morning. Quick start your day by spending the last 15 minutes at the end of the day deciding which work will be top priority the next morning. Number each of the items to be accomplished in the order in which they should be done, then start with the first project the minute you arrive in the morning."

***LOOK INSIDE FOR THE LATEST
S.T.A.R.S. DIRECTORY INFORMATION***



***S.T.A.R.S. Newsletter
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A PUBLICATION OF THE SOUTH TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF RESALE SHOPS