

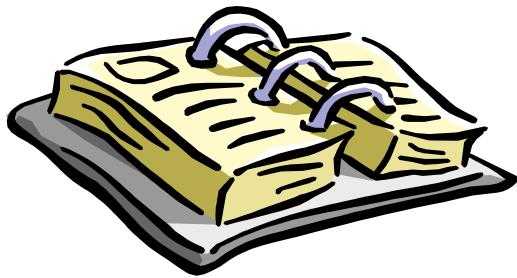


STARS News-

Feb/Mar 2009

Volume

Mark Your Calendars



March 2009

No printing of the STARS Official Directory as we are now an annual publication to be printed each summer.

April 1, 2009

Next printing of the STARS Newsletter. We welcome news or articles from STARS members. Contact the Editor, Pat Swartley, at pswartley@yahoo.com or by phone 281-338-9360.

June 26-29, 2009 Scottsdale, AZ

NARTS annual conference at the Hyatt Regency Scottsdale Resort and Spa. For information visit their website, www.narts.org. STARS is not affiliated with NARTS but we recommend them as a valuable source of Resale/consignment shop information.

The Ongoing Nightmare for Children's Resale

February 10 is day the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008 (H. R. 4040), signed into law by George W. Bush, takes effect. Simply stated, the law says that all products used by children under the age of 12 must be tested for dangerous levels of lead and phthalates before being sold.

This law is very complex, impossible to follow, and furthermore there are no details on how to comply. How do you comply when there is no clear guidance? Who is going to enforce the law? Failure to comply may result in civil and/or criminal action. It is generally believed that the law will put children's resale businesses out of business. Why has there been no such outcry from major retailers?

I find it interesting that resale shops, being at the end of the "food chain", so to speak must bear this burden of proof of the safety of children's products. Why are products manufactured with unsafe levels of lead and phthalates and allowed to enter the retail markets? Why aren't the products tested before entering the retail market? By the time it reaches the resale industry the products could have already harmed children. How does this make any sense? The mentality seems to be, yes all these products should be made without dangerous levels of chemicals but one cannot be sure, so WHOEVER has them to sell must also test to make sure before putting them on the shelves. And the biggest question: HOW do you test them?

Thank you Yolanda for keeping in touch with our member children's resale shops on this complicated issue.

NARTS is kicking and screaming on this issue all the way to congress. The campaign to "Save Children's Resale" is well underway. If this law goes into effect unaltered it will be illegal to sell anything that does not meet the new safety standards. How can you help? Visit the NARTS website for information to help you join the fight and voice your concern to your congressman. Several blogs about the CPSIA law are of interest: Save Kids Resale, The Simple Dollar and Baby Cheapskate. ----The Editor

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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 and other interested persons.

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

Membership in STARS is open to “for-profit” resale/consignment shops in South Texas.

Membership is only \$50 a year and entitles a member to a listing on the STARS website, www.starsresale.com, a copy of the newsletter published 6 times a year, and an invitation to advertise in our annual STARS Official Directory which is printed each June.

We invite our members to link their shop website to their listing on the STARS website. No additional hosting fee is charged. A free email account is also available.

TO JOIN STARS: visit our website and click on “membership” for information. Print and fill out the membership forms and mail with a check for \$50 payable to STARS, to the STARS official address below.

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Letter from the editor...

Is it just me, or does it seem like everywhere you turn somebody is calling, emailing, or handing out a customer service survey? What’s up with that? The obvious answer is the business is doing serious research to determine if you, the customer, like their service or product. In these days of fewer paying customers, it is important to keep what customers you already have.

There are generally two types of surveys. One survey type is very structured with a limited number of questions asking you to answer each question on a scale from 1-5. The second type, and the best survey, will allow you to say, or write a suggestion on how they could improve their service for you. My favorite question is, “Would you recommend this business to your friends, co-workers or family? Why or why not?”

I was annoyed recently by a telephone survey in which the lady wanted to ask me specific questions about my opinion, using the rating scale. I could have given her some important information on how I could have been better served, but she only wanted to ask a question and for me to respond with a number.

My point? Surveys are a very important tool to help you deliver the best service to customers—if you allow the customer to express themselves! Forget the numbers game. You want to hear the good and bad about your store’s service, and a static survey will not give you true answers.

I like being asked my opinion and when a business wants to survey me I get a warm fuzzy feeling that they are professionals wanting to do the best job of pleasing me, obviously a valued customer, or they really want to know if I am dissatisfied in any way so they can fix it to keep me coming back.

Your loyal customers will appreciate being asked their opinion. Thank them for shopping with you and ask them how you can better serve them. Ask if they would recommend your shop to their friends and family and listen to their answers!

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FINAL NOTICE: Yolanda wants to remind you that the renewal dues of \$50 need to be paid by March 1, 2009 or she will remove your listing from the starsresale.com website.

Please continue to support one of the oldest resale associations in America. Your dues are very important to help us continue printing the newsletter and maintaining our website.

Pat Swartley



CONSIGNMENTS R US

by Pat Swartley

If someone were to ask me what one thing in the resale business I found to be most aggravating---I would say taking in consignment merchandise. For me it even tops doing reclaims and all THAT aggravation. (Don't get me started).

When I first began working in a resale shop, The Clothes Basket, which I later bought; I would so dread someone coming in with clothes I would start to tremble and breathe faster. No kidding. I hated accepting consignments from the start. Turning down stuff is by nature an insult no matter how much you try to hide the fact.

The first lesson I learned was if the potential consignor sensed my discomfort with the process, they would try to take advantage and push stuff on me I didn't want. **So here is my first tip: *Walk up to the consignor with authority and look at her things like a professional in the consignment business and they will be too intimidated to argue with you.*** Give the items full attention and make decisions quickly. If you linger over an item the consignor will jump in with, "I paid a lot of money for that and only wore it once." Stay relaxed and friendly. Trust your judgment. If you have reservations about an item, so will your customers. Don't waste floor space on a "maybe".

The thing about taking consignments is the very real possibility that someone will become hostile or unreasonably mad at the rejection of some of their items. We have all had this happen even when we try to be as nice about the turndowns as possible. There are no easy answers to this problem because if you stop them at the door and say their items are unacceptable, that is rude. If you allow them to go to the back and you take time to carefully look at each item before you turn them down, the consignor might get mad. One lady said in anger, "you knew you weren't going to take any of this when I first came in." I said, "That is true, but if I had stopped you at the door would you have been less mad?"

Tip #2: *when a new consignor comes in and says they have a lot of stuff, ask questions.* If their bed-ridden mother-in-law has just died, it is a good idea to offer to help them bring the stuff in. This way you can turn it down in the parking lot, saving everyone a lot of time.

Tip #3: *It is best to look at all items quickly separating the good from the bad, then turn to the consignor and say, "We can take these items, and those are no thank you's."* Then get busy processing the acceptable items and hope they don't ask why some are rejected.

I once took my clothes to a resale shop and the consignment processor looked at each item and said, "We can take this one, but we can't take that one." Then she would go into great detail WHY she would not take an item. I didn't want to hear which items looked old or out-of-date, or had a spot I had missed. Some consignors will insist you tell them exactly why you have turned down items, however. Don't do it. It is an invitation to get into an argument about how sellable an item is. My favorite answer was to wave my hand vaguely and say, "I don't have a market for those items."

No matter how polite or professional you are at rejecting items some people will get flaming mad about it. **Tip #4: *The people who get the maddest are the ones who brought in the worse stuff and they knew you probably wouldn't take it and they are already mad at themselves for wasting the time. Don't let them ruin your day.***



Dear Resale Queen,

I own a resale/consignment shop and we accept consignments anytime we are open for the convenience of our consignors. My question is, so many times people bring stuff in without calling and then they get miffed because our rules are clothes must be on hangers, clean and wrinkled free, in style, etc. and they are standing there with trash bags full of clothes! Then they say the infamous line, "but I didn't know," like you should make an exception for them because of that! How would you handle this situation?

Puzzled in Pearland

Dear Puz,

You just touched one of my raw nerves when it comes to the discussion of the perils of accepting consignment merchandise. I swear, if I ever got back into resale I would only buy outright. Well, never-the-less...brace yourself--there is nothing you can do to stop this except to put a huge sign in the front of your store stating your consignment acceptance policy. Then you will stop some of the problem, but of course, not all of it as there are people who think rules are for other people, NOT THEM.

I have worked the "bag people" two ways with little success. #1, ask them to take all items out of the bags and lay them across your consignment accepting table. After they are laid out, quickly look through them and pick out the acceptable ones and ask the consignor to put them on hangers if they are not too wrinkled.

Now here is the rub: bagged clothes are usually too wrinkled to put out on the floor. If the clothes are fabulous and I really want them, I will take them and use my steamer to make them presentable. Or if the items are a notch lower on my "wow" scale I will ask them to iron and return. Now, don't lie to people! If you really don't care to have the clothes, don't tell them to iron and bring back, hoping you never see them again. Murphy's law dictates they will return. "What? YOU told me to iron the clothes and bring them back and now you don't want them?!" Yeah, I did that one time and yes, I then took the clothes and they passed through my system and were reclaimed by the consignor. She said to me, "I didn't think they would sell." And I agreed, and also learned a lesson.

#2, I open a few bags and kind of check them out, ask questions as to what type of clothing is in the bags, and make a decision to not let them lay the stuff out. Say they aren't items I can sell. There might be a few things that you would regret not finding, but generally it is not worth your time to sort through all of it for just a few things. It is risky to say, "please take the bags home and go through the items, selecting your best ones and then bring them in pressed and on hangers—here are some hangers." They don't know what you want and they will bring in a lot of stuff you don't want and then be mad that you turned it down after they spent all that time ironing and hanging.

#3, With any luck the bag people come in and tell you they have bags and can they bring them in? **No.** Go to the car and check it out and decide if you want to fool with the stuff.

Final Answer: I never had the courage to do this, but in hindsight I wish I had never even considered accepting any merchandise that came in in a bag. It was always a big unproductive time waster and a ruin-my-day adventure.

What did I tell you? There is no easy answers. When I turned people down with bags of clothes, I liked to give them a \$5 gift certificate to shop in the store for their trouble. Then we explained our store policy on consignment for the next time. **Final advice:** always be as nice as you can about rejecting items. Take a deep breath and know in your heart they didn't bring all that trash in to insult you personally. They think they are recycling and just wanted to get rid of it.

The Resale Queen



RESALE SHOPPING NEWS AROUND THE GALAXY.....



Our own **Debbie Damon** of B'Dazzled got her 15 minutes of fame on January 15 during two segments about resale on Fox 26 News at 8 am and 9 pm. She said the Fox news team roamed her store taking lots of video. Debbie was a STAR! How did she get this opportunity? She knows somebody who knows somebody...and that's how it usually happens. Thanks Debbie for giving resale a boost. Let us know the response you got from the interview.

I am sure you have noticed all the media attention directed toward the resale industry lately. Lots of eyes are turning in our direction as a solution to saving money. Your STARS Newsletter Editor has written an article for the February issue of Resale Houston Magazine addressing this trend.

If it's not one thing...it's another. **Pat Broxton**, owner of **A Lot of Panache** in the Clear Lake area hardly got her store cleaned up from roof damage during IKE when a Hummer left the road on highway 270 and took out part of the left side of her store and some of the back wall. No one was hurt. Several hundred feet of her store is sheathed in floor to ceiling black plastic sheeting. Pat was in the store at the time of the accident, which happened one weekday morning several months ago.

To hang or not to hang...that is the question. Most consignment shops request clothing be brought in on hangers, This is a must for ladies clothing but how about children's clothing? Does it really save you time to have children's clothes brought in on hangers?

One STARS children's store asks that clothing be brought in laying flat in laundry baskets. They find this method is easier to completely examine each item; then the consignor is asked to hang the accepted ones on the store hangers. This method saves time removing unacceptable hangers and re-hanging. If your store wants the clothes to remain on the hangers they come in on, then this logic doesn't apply.

You think, as a clothing resale shop, you have a problem turning down potential consignments? Furniture stores face saying no to people with a truckload of stuff! Most require a photo and lots of information and an appointment time before allowing furniture to be brought in. Some stores require the consignor to do all the moving and some provide employees to unload. Some stores go to the homes and check the stuff out first.

One of STARS long-time members closed their doors December 31st. **Toby Hall**, owner of **Perfectly Good Gently Used, etc** in League City, wanted to retire due to health concerns and disappointment over last years sales activity. Thank you, Toby for your support of STARS. Yolanda said Toby was always the first STAR to pay her dues each year. **If you haven't paid 2009 dues yet, this is a reminder! Please keep the newsletter coming into your mailbox and your STARSRESALE.COM listing current. You will not receive a second notice in the mail.**

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



***S.T.A.R.S. Newsletter
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League City, TX 77573***

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Since 1991**