

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS OF RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL CONCESSIONS OPERATION

by Dan Klusmann

I. Thou shalt maximize the number of customers entering your front door. The best concessions operation in the world won't make money without customers. Traffic is the key to concessions success. If you don't have traffic, go get some.

II. Thou shalt train and motivate a sales staff. We aren't talking "order takers" here. We are talking happy, enthusiastic, attractive, motivated sales people who know how to sell and how to serve effectively. Suggestive selling begins with training, contests and rewards.

III. Thou shalt sell premium products. If your popcorn is not the best popcorn your customers can find anywhere, then you are hurting yourself. It should be popped fresh nightly with the enticing aroma contributing to the moviegoing experience. If your soft drinks are not perfect, if your candy is not super-fresh, if your nachos, hot dogs or other products are not the best in town, why not? You've got the ability to make sure they are. You will be rewarded handsomely if you pay attention to product quality.

IV. Thou shalt charge a premium price. Raise prices and per cap, and profits go up. Charge the very most the market will bear (or your conscience will allow).

V. Thou shalt offer a deal. Soften the blow by offering a special combo that saves your customers money, provides a value-added bonus, and gives your sales force something to suggest.

VI. Thou shalt market the deal. Attractive signage, displays, employee buttons, coupons handed out at the box office, intermission slides, screen ads and focus on value-added bonuses from other merchants equal maximized sales and profit. If every customer is made aware of and understands the deal, and if through value-added merchandising the deal is made even sweeter, then you will enjoy both maximum sales and happy customers.

VII. Thou shalt innovate, experiment and always offer something new. Change signage and displays, introduce new products, offer free popcorn samples and vary the value-added bonuses. Learn from and document your experimentation so you are always getting better at what you do.

VIII. Thou shalt listen and observe. Listen to what customers are saying. Ask them what they like best (and least) about your concessions operation. Observe interaction between your sales force and customers. Be aware of innovations in area fast-food restaurants and snack-bar operations and copy what works for them. Consider self-service, free refills, bottled water, energy drinks, salt-free and flavored popcorn, etc.

IX. Thou shalt increase efficiency and control labor costs. Seek to constantly find ways to serve customers more quickly and efficiently. Use runners to fill orders quickly with minimal steps. In your show scheduling, avoid big films starting at the same time. Look for ways to be most flexible in quickly increasing or decreasing concessions staff based on how busy you are. Become aware of labor costs versus concessions sales and know when increasing or decreasing staff will improve profit.

X. Thou shalt see your concessions operation as a customer. Observe through their eyes. Think the way they think. Great customer service, a clean inviting concessions area, cupholders, a smile—it's all common sense. When we are the customers, these are the things we want. We can't go wrong when we treat customers the way we would like to be treated.



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