



Quit Telling the Customer “No” to Get Them to Say “Yes”

The key to creating sales is to get the customer to say “yes.” But many of the messages we give our customers start with “No.” No drinks, no pets, no refunds without a receipt, no this, no that... No wonder we don’t get enough people saying “Yes!”

In fact, saying “No” to the customer is so common that “No shirts, no shoes, no service” is actually perceived as a clever greeting to customers. Think of it this way: Your customers haven’t set foot in your store yet, and you’re already telling them, “No.”

What’s worse are signs that scold the customer, such as “Don’t touch.” What kind of experience does that provide a customer? When a customer is attracted to something – whether it’s a t-shirt, a crystal unicorn, or a ballpoint pen, it’s human nature to want to touch it. Touching an item is part of the buying process. *What fabric is this sweater made of? How does this purse strap feel on my shoulder? How does this pen feel in my hand?*

Profitable Retailers replace those “No” signs with “Yes” signs.

The Profitable Retailer

Instead of telling customers “No drinks allowed,” give them drinks! Yes, a few products will get ruined but it’s likely that you’ll get more customers in the store, and as a result, sell more products.

I know a store that has a Starbucks next door. Now, most of us would love to have a Profitable Retailer like Starbucks next door. They create an incredible amount of traffic and attract an affluent customer base. What more could you ask for? But this retailer has a “No Drinks” sign on their door! I figure the next sign to go up in the store will be, “Space For Lease.”

Replace that “no refunds without a receipt” sign with “refunds gladly made with a receipt.” Replace the “no pets” sign with a “pet bar,” which could be nothing more than a place outdoors to leave a pet in the shade complete with fresh water. Pet owners will love you and it will keep the pets outside.

Here are some other examples:

- Replace “No personal checks” with “We accept Visa and MasterCard.”
- Take down the “No Admittance” sign to your backroom and replace with “Staff Members Only.”
- If you have a “No Cell Phones” sign up, it can be replaced with a “Please Take All Phone Calls Outside.”
- If you have “No Shirts, No Shoes, No Service,” you have the same sign as a million other retailers. Try being a little more original by putting up a sign that reads “Shirts and Shoes Required.”
- Remove the “No Soliciting” sign altogether. You can

always tell a salesperson nicely that you're too busy to meet with him but from time to time you might actually want to learn about something he is selling.

Few stores have merchandise so fragile that customers can't touch it. Sure, an item will be broken from time to time, but that's a cost of doing business. Adopt the policy of a retailer such as Barnes & Noble that has one sample copy of an expensive coffee table book clearly labeled "Sample," while the rest are shrink-wrapped. Every Barnes & Noble sacrifices one book for customers to examine while the rest remain pristine. Both the retailer and the customer benefit.

Signs should be helpful to customers, pointing out departments, sales, new products, and special prices. Signs can be there to inform customers even when a salesperson isn't with them. Signage must always be sensitive to customers. Signs should say "YES!"

The Question: What negative signs in your store can you replace with positive ones?