

# If nothing else, collect the money

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I can "wait over there" with the best of them. I've been married for almost 44 years and I have two daughters and a granddaughter, so "waiting over there" is a skill honed to perfection during thousands of hours of intense training.

This is particularly useful during the Christmas shopping season. You see, when a man goes to a store for "a couple of things" the number in his mind is two (a couple). However, when a woman goes to a store for "a couple of things" the number in her mind can be anything between two and 100,000. Hence, I'm told quite often to "stand over there and wait." I used to dread this but now I don't mind because I've gotten really good at it.

My favorite "there" to wait is at the front of a store. Over the years I've been able to observe the mechanics of retail operations and I have a couple (two) of observations. They both seem to be reoccurring themes regardless of location. First, I'm amazed at how retail operations continually violate the first rule of business. As my late father, Big Don, often told me: "Son, if you have a business the one thing that you need to do best is make it easy for people to give you their money. If you don't do anything else, collect money in the fastest,

most efficient way possible."

The odd part about this is that when people come to a retail operation they actually want to give the operation their money. That's their purpose in being there, to trade their money for stuff the store has. What people don't want to do is gather all the stuff they want to purchase and then come to a screeching halt in a long checkout line.

At this point most writers would say something like, "Now, I don't want to tell you how to run your business." The heck with that. I do want to tell you how to run your business: "Make it easy for people to give you their money!"

With all that said, we shoppers also have a part to play in this scenario. My second observation is that I'm amazed at how many shoppers seem unaware of the fact that they will have to pay for the stuff in their shopping cart. They wait in a checkout line, watch the cashier tally up their purchases, and it isn't until the cashier says something



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like "that will be \$67.12," that it dawns on them that payment might be required.

Now the wheels of commerce stop while the shopper does a mental inventory of assets. Hmmm, do I want to pay by check, cash, or debit card? Did I bring any of that with me? If the shopper is a woman this means a dive into a purse containing more freight than the average cargo ship.

If the shopper is a man this means cracking open a wallet the size and weight of a cinder block.

Come on folks, we owe it to our fellow checkout line mates to be ready to pull the payment trigger when the target is in full view. If the store is doing all it can to make it easy to collect our money the least we can do is be ready to give it to them.

I could go on and on about my "stand there and wait" findings, but those two are the retail biggies. Another aspect of waiting, though, concerns the places where we all wait — waiting rooms. I have an opinion/observation about that too.

Most of the time there are television sets in waiting rooms. Most of the time the sound is muted or so low it's difficult to hear. So, it makes no sense to me to have on a soap opera, news show, sitcom, or a four-hour special about the feeding habits of yaks.

My suggestion is that every waiting room TV should be tuned to the Weather Channel. Why? Talking about the weather is a common waiting room chat topic. Sound is not required; the graphics and text tell the story. It updates every eight minutes (Weather on the 8s), so there's no long-term time commitment is required. No politics are involved, so there are no rankled feelings. According to demographics, around 50 percent of people between the ages of 18-54 regularly watch the Weather Channel, so it's really popular. (I'd toss in that for 54-over the Weather Channel is like MTV for old people — me included.)

All of these observations seem obvious to me, but only time will tell if any of these suggestions will come to pass. In the meantime, I think I'll just go stand over there and wait.

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