

## Creating a welcome atmosphere

By Susan G Mathis

There are many ways to create a welcoming atmosphere for your customers and community. Here are a few:

### 1. Encourage your employees to love your customers by living 1 Corinthians 13. Love is...

- Patient: always make your customers feel welcome and never rushed, especially with children. Pay attention to their non-verbal cues. If you see the customer fidgeting, shifting their eyes, or touching their face, give them space to browse the store. Watch for nonverbal cues that indicate the customer needs assistance. If the customer drops his or her shoulders in resignation or sighs, he or she will probably welcome your help.
- Kind: when you greet customers, tell them about your specials and make sure they feel welcome. Show your appreciation for their patronage, and speak kindly to them.
- It does not envy: find local authors and invite them to host a gathering at your store. They can bring new customers as well as help you engage in the community.
- It does not boast: get to know your customers and care about them. Ask customer's permission to ask questions about what they might like instead of hard selling.
- It is not proud: encourage customers to be a part of your ministry. It's not just about business.
- It does not dishonor others: be gentle and honoring to parents with children. Provide a place for children to explore books and media, and if there's a problem, honor the parent enough to let her deal with her own child.
- It is not self-seeking: don't push products, child sponsorship programs, or other things. Let God do that.
- It is not easily angered: avoid showing displeasure or anger when customers complain or are rude.
- It keeps no record of wrongs: forgive customers who spill things, make messes, are rude, etc.
- Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth: enough said.
- It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres: be Christ with skin on.

### 2. Engage the senses.

- Sight: make sure your store is orderly, clean, and visually appealing. Customers can easily feel uncomfortable if lighting and heating are poor. Use skylights and lots of natural light, if possible, and pay attention to maintaining a consistent temperature so customers will linger. Products set in natural light sell better.
- Sound: play soft worship music rather than rock or other music. Sensory overload can overwhelm customers. Quiet, calming music helps.
- Smell: clean and fresh is best.
- Taste: provide tea or coffee when possible.
- Touch: encourage customers to enjoy browsing.

Susan G Mathis is an author, editor, and international speaker. Her books, *Countdown for Couples: Preparing for the Adventure of Marriage*, and *The ReMarriage Adventure: Preparing for a Lifetime of Love & Happiness*, are great books for premarital events.

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