

Attention to detail: Making customers comfortable and aware can boost sales

by Andrew Potter

Providing quality products and services is certainly the primary focus of concessionaires. However, there are also peripheral and atmospheric perceptions that can create a positive environment for your concession customers. Kare Anderson believes delving into providing the little things surrounding your operation can also boost sales as it creates a healthy atmosphere around the venue.

Anderson, of the Say It Better Center, presented "Offer the Experiences that Spur Sales" during the 2003 NAC Convention. Anderson has conducted years of research on tracking people's gut instincts, and their physiological responses to a person, place or thing.

She believes time should be spent from the customer's perspective, seeing everything they see, touch and smell at your venue on a typical visit. She advises that concessionaires should examine the patron's total sensory experience at their venue, or what she calls an "exposures audit."

Simple signage

Often, customers are lured to the concession stand by signage, which should get the message out without being cluttered. "Signage should be bigger, more obvious, more simple, and something they can see from far away," Anderson said. She noted signage needs a landmark, or one large detail, and should steer clear of being too busy or too much for the patron to take in. "If we have a focal point that draws the eye inevitably to one main thing that looks good – and photographic is better than anything else – it attracts their attention and starts the salivation process."

The signage should also be able to be viewed by three sides as not every patron approaches the sign from directly in front. Anderson suggested when considering signage from the customer's per-

spective you should videotape the views of the signs from different angles. "Walk into every angle by which someone can approach your place – can they see that luscious sign from all angles?" she asked.

These mouth-watering signs need to be big enough to keep the patron's attention. "The longer you have to think about what you are seeing, the greater the chance you will buy when you pass by," she said.

If you want to keep patrons from walking on by, you may want to look into what they are walking on. Anderson's research shows when people are walking from normal to real soft, cushy carpet they tend to linger in that area. "People pause in real soft carpet and they like better what they see ahead of them, and they don't realize it's because of what's under their feet," she said.

When looking to create a more comfortable, positive atmosphere Anderson

"Walk into every angle by which someone can approach your place – can they see that luscious sign from all angles?"

suggests checking the edges and corners of counters and tables. Rounded corners, rather than harsh edges on tables and counters, provide a more positive atmosphere and results in people liking each other better.

Sampling

Anderson's research has shown sampling outside of the stand creates more sales inside. The research has proven that giving customers a brief hint of what is waiting in store at the concession stands has resulted in an increase in



sales.

Success in sampling is anchored by providing samplers who know what to say to create a positive buzz around the products. Samplers should ask questions that might spur positive responses and feeling throughout the line such as "tell us what you like best about it."

This may get people in line for tickets or walking around the venue talking about that food sample and create interest in purchases.

Body language

There are several practices your employees can enact when addressing people to make them feel more comfortable. A positive and comfortable impression will make them more apt to purchase concessions and think positively about their experience. "Slow motions, slow talking, looking at people in the eye, these are all signs of respect," Anderson noted.

Even the angle of your body can have an effect on the people you interact with. "Facing people right in front of them is a like a face-off, a hostile thing to do," she explained. "We should approach people and serve people on an angle which is more respectful."

This is a partial version of the complete story that appeared in the Summer 2003 issue of Concessionworks, the newsletter for NAC members. [To become a member of NAC click here](#). Members that would like to receive the complete story can call the NAC office at (312) 236-3858.