

How to turn ghosts into Customers

Let's deal with a new indicator, which - being invisible - is often neglected: ghosts.

Helping to raise awareness on individual roles, generating a results-oriented culture for companies and fostering recognition for the most effective behaviours is extremely inspiring and rewarding to me. I am determined to increasingly share this "passion" of mine which, fortunately, is also my job. I am truly inspired by this sentence: *What you give is yours forever, what you keep is lost forever* (from the Qur'an: hadith from the Prophet told by his wife Aisha).

In this post, I introduce a new indicator: **Ghosts**. It measures the number of Customers who come in, look interested in buying something but, for reasons often ascribable to the Store Seller, leave without buying anything. I call them "ghosts" because no one sees or nurtures them as they deserve. In my opinion, the responsibility lies with the Store Seller and, ultimately, with the Store Manager and the Retail Manager, who have greater responsibilities.

The scene from the film **Love Actually** is some useful food for thought to argue my point. Most of the time, people act with good intentions. I am indeed aware that many also have "bad" intentions, but I want to start from the assumption that people are well-intentioned.

To me, problems arise when the real goal is unclear. As argued in the post, if someone is encouraged to pursue a specific objective ("make sure that Customers leave the store with a nice gift bag") they will work hard to achieve it. The intention that will distract from what should be the main objective: finding an acceptable solution both for the Customer and for sales results.

It's about being tangible, and ghosts, by definition, are not

To make ghosts become tangible, conveying consistent messages is crucial. The Retail Manager should be the first one to implement a Sales Effectiveness strategy by influencing the behaviours of the whole retail chain. The Store Manager, too, has this huge responsibility. Those who have been Store Managers know very well how complex it is to reconcile needs and requests coming from the market, from the head office, from suppliers, etc., with collaborators' behaviours that ultimately determine a store's results. This is a complex situation where it becomes very difficult to reconcile these important elements. A dialogue, a unique relationship between the Customer, who has wishes, and the Store Seller, who is responsible for welcoming, understanding by asking questions and has the honour of committing to help the Customer fulfil this wish.

The Store Manager must help his/her collaborators to think out of the box when selling, to move away from an artificial service standard, from banality and monotony. He/she must help them to “love” their jobs as Store Sellers (which cannot be improvised, like all things, if performed in a professional way), to always be extremely diligent in order to guarantee Sales Effectiveness, to create the right conditions for things to happen. To turn his/her store resources from ghosts to an active and central part of the business. To encourage commitment and the sharing of results and objectives, to celebrate success even though - for efficiency reasons - FTEs are constantly downsized. We must recognise that it is difficult.

But difficult does not mean impossible!

There are many things that can be done. The aim of these posts is to encourage a dialogue, through prompts and suggestions, on possible solutions that can lead to effective store sales.