

MY VIEW

Founder Wayne Fortin



TIP LITE

We have all heard the advice.... KISS (keep it simple, stupid.) Recently I saw simplicity in action like I've never seen it before when I went to get my eyeglasses repaired. The business is called HOT SHOTS, and if I didn't know beforehand that it was a 30-year-old successful business I would think it was on the verge of collapse. It was the most bare bones operation I've ever experienced. Let me describe the business...

- ◆ **The office:** There were 2 small rooms... a waiting room and the work room. The waiting room was small and in serious need of paint. There were no pictures on the wall and no music playing. There was a small bare reception desk with no phone and no receptionist. There were 3 plastic chairs on the linoleum floor. I never got to see inside the dark work room. I just heard the owner occasionally shout from inside... *"Your glasses are ready."*
- ◆ **The Staff:** The only employee was the owner...no receptionist...no assistants. When I was there a few customers walked in and wondered out loud... *"Are they open?"* To say there was no customer service at HOT SHOTS is an understatement.
- ◆ **Conversation:** When the owner left his work room and came into the waiting room he didn't engage in small talk. He made no effort to engage the customers in conversation. When a customer tried telling the owner the story of how, when, where he broke his glasses, he was cut off with *"Do you want me to fix them?"* When I asked the owner how much I owed him he held up 5 fingers which meant \$5.00 dollars. (I would have paid \$20.00.)
- ◆ **Paperwork:** None
- ◆ **Technology:** None that I could see... no computer, no phone. When I looked at the HOT SHOTS website it looked like it was created 20 years ago, probably by the owner.

As I mentioned previously, HOT SHOTS is a 30-year-old successful business. Frequently, there is a line of people waiting to get in. It has a sterling reputation and hundreds of loyal customers. Marketing is by word of mouth. Everyone I tell about my HOT SHOTS experience has either been there, knows someone who has been there, or has referred someone there.

After returning from HOT SHOTS, I couldn't help but ask myself ... *"How is this business so successful when it inhabits a shabby office, has no friendly customer service and is devoid of basic technology?"*

There are probably many reasons, but here are the two that will bring me back to HOT SHOTS when I need my glasses repaired...

1. **Quality Service:** Although there was no smiling receptionist to greet me, and the office space was sparse at best I overlooked those things because I received what I really valued...
 - **My time:** I was in and out in 15 minutes.
 - **Quality:** My repaired glasses look new.
 - **Value:** The low cost was an incredible deal.
2. **Trust:** It became obvious to me that the HOT SHOTS owner was trustworthy, something I really value (and often find lacking) when I'm at the mercy of a service person. One of the few phrases the owner of HOT SHOTS used when I was there was *"I'll fix them."* What I usually hear from service people is... *"I'll take a look..." "Let me see what I can do..." "You need a new ____."* There is no B.S. at HOT SHOTS. The owner just does what he says... *"I'll fix them."*

I share my HOT SHOTS experience with you because it was a dramatic "real world" example of what's really important in operating a successful business. I've often believed in keeping things simple, in being trustworthy and in the power of quality and service. But to see it play out in such an "extreme" way at HOT SHOTS was really something.

I'm always trying to turn my everyday experiences into lessons that I can use as a TIP leader. My HOT SHOT experience is no exception. Mostly that experience validated how we already operate in TIP. We provide a no-frills quality service with few staff and very little overhead. If there were a "HOT SHOT SIMPLICITY RATING," TIP would receive an A.

But I think we need to be vigilant. I have found myself at times introducing what is bigger, newer, and higher tech into our organization only to be disappointed. I've had to back up and practice what management guru Peter Drucker calls "systematic destruction" i.e., getting rid of programs, procedures and plans which look good, but which aren't necessary and are not worth the effort they require.

As HOT SHOTS reminds us, we need to focus on the basics. If we do, we will continue to be successful.

Let's stay TIP LITE!

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