

The Helicopter Retailer

I **RECENTLY HEARD** the term “helicopter parent” for the first time. If you’re not familiar with this phrase, it refers to a parent who hovers over their child too much – whether at home or when it comes to school. First, one of my neighbors told me she was accused by her son’s teacher of “helicoptering”; then I saw the helicopter-parent topic addressed in a nationally published advice column. Apparently, this has become a hot button.

Similar to this concept is what I’ll dub the “helicopter retailer” – a store owner or employee who hovers over their customers too much. You know the type! (You might even be guilty yourself of this well-intentioned practice.) It can easily happen when a customer enters an empty shop and encounters an anxious salesperson, or if there are too many salespeople on the floor (especially if they’re on commission).

The danger of the “helicopter parent” is producing an adult who is not self-sufficient. The danger of the “helicopter retailer” is losing a customer. Just as there’s a fine line between a parent who’s helpful versus too involved, the same holds true for retailers. There’s nothing worse than needing help in a store and finding no one available to assist. Yet, an overly attentive retailer can make a customer feel as if they’re being pressured into buying something or, worse yet, feel like they’re being watched over to make sure they’re not shoplifting.

As we head into the busy fall season, remind your staff to be helpful and to offer advice when asked, but not to allow themselves to become a “helicopter retailer.” Providing the right balance of customer service can really help make sales fly.



Kathy

Kathy Krassner
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



EDITOR'S CHOICE

Walking past a booth at the Temporaries @ L.A. Mart trade show in Los Angeles, CA, this July, I smelled an amazing scent of coffee. I looked over and noticed that this was the same company that attracted me to its booth with the soothing aroma of lavender at the National Stationery Show in New York City in May. The company is Scentsational Greetings, and its new “Scentology 101” line takes scented greeting cards to a whole new dimension! Pairing vibrant, photographic imagery and witty versing with yummy, not overpowering scents, these cards will attract customers’ sense of sight and smell.

Inner verse of this vanilla-scented card (\$3.50) from **SCENTSATIONAL GREETINGS** (800/358-7801) continues: “Than wrinkles! Happy Birthday.”