

News Column for Use Week of 06/10/19
John Forshee, District Director/Community Vitality Agent
River Valley Extension District
06/07/19

The Value of First Impressions for Businesses

Over the past few years you may have been involved in the work K-State Research and Extension has done in communities with the First Impressions Program. In this program, we pair up two similar communities and then we train a team for each community to evaluate the other in a variety of categories. Although this concept is for communities, it could also be valuable for individual businesses as well.

Let's take a look at how we might apply those concepts with a few questions we might ask ourselves as business owners. Or, better yet, pair up with a neighboring business and complete the questions for each other!

Storefront – As business owners, we often park in the alley and enter from the rear entrance of the store. So occasionally, we must be intentional in looking at the front of our store with these questions in mind. What does the building look like? Is the awning in good condition, or is it faded? Is the storefront paint fresh and bright, or is it peeling? Look up. What does the second story of the storefront look like? Is our sidewalk and curb in good repair, or are there trip and fall hazards present? Do we have any flower planters or any green space that gives our storefront life? Do we have adequate parking?

Signage – Drive down the street in front of your business. From this “drive by” can we easily identify the name of the business? Is there a readily identifiable “Open” sign? Can we see lights from the street giving an indication we are open for business? Do we have a 3-D sign extending from the building making us easily visible as we approach? If signs are flat to the building, or painted on the windows, is the lettering large enough to be seen and read at the posted speed limit? Do we have business hours posted, and are these current? Now, answer these same questions by walking the street in front of your business. One might be surprised at how different your answers are from these two vantage points.

On-line Presence – Do we have a website? If we do, does it accurately reflect our business? Is it up-to-date? Does it list our hours of operation, our mission, our products, or service? Does the website contain a means to purchase on-line? If not, are we a type of business that should consider on-line sales? Does it give a means for customers or potential customers to contact us? Do we use social media? If so, are we studying the data available with those sites to make sure we are reaching the demographics we choose to reach?

Customer Service – When a customer walks in the front door, what is their first impression? Is there correct or adequate lighting? Are they greeted in a friendly and helpful way? Are aisles clean and free of obstructions or hazards? Is there good signage within the store? Is check-out efficient, friendly, and customer focused? Are customers thanked for shopping or using the service?

This list is by no means complete, but my goal was to provide some food for thought for business owners to consider as they work to provide a great “First Impression” for every customer, every time they visit the business! Good luck and remember, you only get one chance to make a good first impression. Let's make the most of that opportunity! For more information

on our First Impressions program, please contact John Forshee by calling the River Valley District, Clay Center Office at 785-632-5335 or email jforshee@ksu.edu.

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