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Ms. von Uhl

### **Fieldnotes**

Prior to working in customer service, I would walk into a store without paying any attention to the cashier greeting me. Today, I fully understand how cashiers might feel when their greetings are ignored. Especially working in my store, I can understand that cashiers are pushed to greet every customer to provide excellent customer service. When customers walk into my store, there is always a cashier at the first register greeting them. This is something my boss, Chris, is very diligent about following.

I work at one of the smaller, lesser known, CVS stores located in a small shopping plaza. However, even for a store that size, there always seems to be a plethora of customers. This may be due to the fact that we are the only CVS close to the town of Croton Harmon. On the other hand, my boss likes to think it's because we have excellent, friendly, employees. Whatever the reason, my store is still a decent size for a store and a pharmacy. Unlike some other CVS stores, my store has the registers lined up right next to the entrance. This makes it easy to greet customers walking in and watch out for any customers who might walk out without paying. Next to the registers, are the computers for the photo section of our store. This is where customers can print out their photos and get helped by our photo assistants. In my store, there are exactly 21 aisles with easy to read signs that say almost exactly where everything is. Something that amazed me when I started working there is how big the storage area of the store is. I would say it is

bigger than the store itself. Thinking about it now, that does seem logical since all the overstock has to fit there. Walking into the back room requires a code so only employees can enter. When you walk into the back room, the overstock is on the left side, neatly organized by aisles and the new items are on the right side. It is placed to make working functional since there are usually many employees back there at one time. Next to the back room, there are two smaller rooms. One is used for the interviews and the other is mostly used by pharmacy employees. They are both very small, clean rooms. Even so, the break room that I enjoy the most is the one by the bathrooms. I enjoy it the most for two reasons. Partly because the bathrooms are right next to it, and because it is very quiet and peaceful. This is where all my coworkers go to unwind and relax after a long shift.

I like to think that I get along with all my coworkers. Some more than others, but regardless we are all good with customer service. Understanding the culture of customer service is something that has always interested me. I was a late starter to getting a job, meaning that I started working when I was 18, as opposed to all my other friends who started way younger. Back then, I assumed that because I was a more reserved person I could not be a good employee because I would be too shy with customers. However, I feel that the first step to overcoming my reserved attitude was to step out of my comfort zone and start in a place where I knew I would constantly be talking to new people.

There are days that are easier than others. For instance, I usually work the morning shift on Saturdays and Sundays, which are particularly easy because the store is not as busy in the morning. Therefore, greeting customers walking in is fairly easy and the customers I have are the usual customers who always come in for their newspaper. At this point, I recognize many of

those customers and I am sure they recognize me as well. There is one middle aged lady who always comes in Saturday mornings and gets the same newspaper. She always has the exact change and never asks for a receipt, which makes it really easy for me. It would make me really happy if all the customers were as easy going as her. However, that is not the case.

The town where I work is very small and is mostly populated by middle aged, white people. I rarely see any Hispanic customers at my store. The few that do come in, already know I am one of the only cashiers who speak fluent spanish and they always come to me for help. I definitely do not mind being one of the only spanish speakers because I get to communicate and help customers who may not speak english. I remember one time there was one pregnant customer who needed help translating to one of the pharmacists because she needed a prescription. Even though, I am fluent in spanish, I still face difficulties when translating. Even so, it felt nice to be able to help her. Aside from her, there are other spanish speaking customers who always greet me. There is another young customer who always comes to me for advice on what makeup to get. I am no expert in makeup, but at least she thinks so. Aside from these few customers, the bigger part of our customers are non-hispanic.

Many of my coworkers are also english speakers. I know four of my coworkers are of hispanic descent, but they do not speak fluent spanish. This is something I am not used to coming from a hispanic dominated town. I can say that I do enjoy being one of the only spanish speakers because I have that small advantage over them when it comes to helping out different customers. This goes back to providing customer service, as I get to help out almost every customer who walks in the store. Something I had to get used was the employee “hierarchy” in my store. Of course, this is not too surprising as managers will always boss the cashiers.

However, I have noticed that there are some employees my managers prefer over others. My boss loves anyone who is always being friendly to the customers. Other managers just like when employees get the job done. For example, one my favorite managers,, Erika, is one of the few who prefers the employees get their work done. Erika is the exact way I would expect a manager to act with customers. She talks to the customers in a way that makes them feel welcomed and important. Nonetheless, she never lets a customer walk over her or give her attitude. In that way I admire her way of performing customer service as it represents the perfect balance. Whenever I work with her, it is easier to finish my tasks because she does not expect too much from the employees. Most of my coworkers are around my age and attend college. This means we have a lot in common, which makes it easy to get along with each other. There are some workers who do more work than others and there are workers who are constantly complaining about their workload. Personally, I do not feel that there is an excessive amount of work unless you are one of the only employees on the shift. This does tend to happen every so often and leaves one person to do all the closing by themselves.

Overall, working with a variety of customers has helped me overcome some of my shyness. Getting to know my coworkers has also helped me. I have learned it is important to not take anything to heart when you are constantly dealing with new people, as many of the things the customers do have nothing to do with the employees.