

Small things can produce massive results

 By [Chris Brewer](#)

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Sometimes, when I'm wandering around I'm absolutely amazed at how many traders get it wrong. With a little thought they could do so much better. It's just mostly simple and obvious things.

For example, there's a pub I like going to, but recently I left without ordering anything. When the manager asked me if I had a problem I said "No, *you* have a problem because your music selection is really rubbish (I think it was acid rock or something like that) and also, it's just too damn loud! Just take a look around you and watch what your customers are doing – they're all trying to have conversations – every one of them – and they're having to shout. Now, that has to be wrong, so I'm going down the road to another pub."

On the subject of pubs, I'm currently reading another Bill Bryson book (*Road to Little Dribbling*) where he's exploring various towns and cities in Britain.

This is what he wrote when visiting Ironbridge in Shropshire:

“ At the bottom of the village was a pub called the White Hart Inn, which had a signboard out front stating that you could come in and use the toilets without buying anything – a statement so kind and agreeable and unique that I instantly made it my favourite pub in Shropshire and Ironbridge my favourite community. ”

Note that he didn't mention the ambience, drinks, food, parking or service. It was the sign that did it and it reflected on the entire village. Obviously nice people. It really is that simple.

Back to the music again. Even really professional retailers such as Woolworths sometimes amaze me. I was in one of their shops recently and their choice of music was truly appalling. It was sort of "obscure rock" (for want of a better description) and way too loud. I looked at the age of the average customer there and I can confidently bet that none of them appreciated it. In fact, from the looks on their faces, it was just an annoyance.

On the other hand, I was chatting to the management of a Spar shop – lovely place and very well run. To my mind the music was a) wrong and b) too loud. But the owner pointed out to me that, perhaps, it just wasn't my personal choice but urged me to look at the customers, which I did.



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Most of them looked happy and some were even humming along with the tunes. Okay, so I was wrong and they were obviously right. Sometimes it may not be immediately obvious to people like me that I criticise with a substantial bias. But I still think I'm essentially right.

In an age where we have so much access to data there **must** be a way to calculate what type and volume of music encourages people to buy more? Surely someone's done the research?

Most of the time, it isn't just the price. It could be anything (small) at all. After a shaky start, I now really like the Virgin gym I go to – mainly because the pretty girl on reception always smiles and says “Hi Chris – have a lovely time”. It makes me feel special and that's why I go there. Simple.

There are so many other ways to keep your customers happy – and they're not complicated.

As a final note on keeping people happy, there are a few local guys I use for various services and I try to post recommendations on our community Facebook page. It really is amazing how much business they get from these referrals. Of course, they have to keep doing what they *do* do well but, apart from that, it doesn't take too much effort.

But oh dear me, when I see the bombardment of messages from some people trying too hard then, in my opinion, it comes quite close to abuse. Some of them even use capital letters, liberally sprinkled with exclamation marks. Now, any first-year marketing student will tell you that is most certainly *not* the way to go about it.

And always remember that any sharing of information on platforms such as Facebook is a double-edged sword. If a customer gets even slightly cheesed off with you, you're going to come off worse in any message exchange. So don't go there, and treat the use of social media very, very warily. It can bite.

Never forget the small things and, obviously, keep your customers happy. Many of them will recommend you (to friends and via the internet) and, in fact, handle a lot of your marketing effort without you having to lift a finger. You can then smile all the way to the bank.

Simple. And small. But big returns.

ABOUT CHRIS BREWER

Having joined the ad industry in London, Chris Brewer spent most of his career in media analysis and planning - but has performed just about every advertising task from Creative to Research. He's an honorary lifetime member of the Advertising Media Association and regularly advises agencies and clients regarding their media plan costs and strategies. He is also often asked to talk at industry functions. Email: chris@brewers.co.za. Twitter: [@brewersapps](https://twitter.com/brewersapps). Read his blog: www.brewersdroop.co.za

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