

## 2.1: Chapter Introduction

### Cheshire Package Store



Figure 2.1.1: Copy and Paste Caption here. (Copyright; author via source)

Robert Brown has been the owner and operator of the Cheshire Package Store for 25 years. It is one of several liquor stores in this town of 25,000 people. Some of his competitors are smaller or approximately the same size, and one is significantly larger. Robert is very clear in his understanding of what gives his store a competitive edge. He believes his establishment provides the setting that makes a customer feel at home. “My feeling has always been that small businesses must have a feeling of comfort. If your customers do not feel that they can ask you questions about the product or if they feel that they are imposing on you, then they are not likely to return.”

Robert took every opportunity available to better understand his customers and provide them with value. One way his business does this is by developing a personal relationship with its customers. This may mean carefully looking at checks or credit cards, not for security reasons, but to identify customers by name. Robert points out that he always pays careful attention to what customers like and dislike; by doing so, they develop confidence in his suggestions. To foster this confidence, he and his family actively engage their customers in conversations. Customers, Robert, and the employees share stories, which is a key way to build better customer relationships. By listening to his customers, Robert can identify what they are looking for and assist him in knowing what new products he might offer.

In addition to this personalized level of service, the Cheshire Package Store also recognizes the importance of other factors. Robert talks about the importance of maintaining a well-lit store with spacious aisles, making it an inviting place in which to shop. He is careful about even minor details, such as assuring that there are open parking spaces near the entrance to his store. He recognizes that even walking short distances to or from the store might be a burden or deterrent for his customers. Robert’s store possesses a cutting-edge inventory software package designed specifically for liquor stores. It enables him to track inventory levels, which can provide estimates for future inventory levels of different products; however, he sees this as a guide only. As he puts it, “Your knowledge of your customers will be the key determinant for your success.”

Robert also strongly believes that the success of a small business depends on the owner being there. Stores have their own personality, in his view, and that personality is created by the owner. This personality imparted by the owner impacts all operational aspects of the business—“Your employees will pick up on what you expect, and they will know what your customers deserve.”

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