



The Starbucks™ System of Checklists

By Philip P. Beyer

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It's almost embarrassing to realize I visit Starbucks coffee stores so frequently they tend to know me by name! If my wife Susan didn't know me so well, she might well be jealous when young women at several stores happily welcome me as if I were their only customer. But, that's the kind of consistent, friendly service I've come to expect at Starbucks wherever I go.

Knowing what I know now about the importance of good systems, I felt certain the coffee giant had more than just a great system of employing great people. Surely, I decided, Starbucks must operate using some elaborate system of checklists ... to my way of thinking, the one thing that could account for their stunning success!

This past Saturday morning, stopping for my "grande decaf Americana with a little cream," I finally saw the actual checklists that allow Starbucks to offer such a consistently high level of service. Emily, a young "barista" (one who makes those wonderful cups of coffee) and who was also earning a degree in marketing, was up on a step ladder wiping and cleaning an overhead fixture. I asked her if she was using a checklist for cleaning. "Yes," she said, and pointed to a binder at the end of the counter. In other words, Starbucks doesn't just *tell* people to clean when the store gets a little slow; they have a SYSTEM for cleaning Starbucks.

As the person behind the counter made my "usual" (just exactly as I like it), one of the other employees who had overheard me talking to Emily was more than happy to show me the checklists. In fact, it was a whole binder full of checklists.

The young man explained that each store receives a new set of checklists each month detailing all actions to be taken daily, to ensure consistency and the success of each store. Staff is required to check off each item on the list as it is completed, and checklists are then returned to Corporate for review. Certain inspectors are employed by Starbucks Corporate to travel to various stores with their own checklists to be sure each store is actually following the Starbucks system as these completed checklists would indicate. I call this a *follow-up system*. This ensures that products, services and the Starbucks brand are held to the highest possible standard.

As I've stated in my book, *System Busters: How to Stop Them in Your Business*, a detailed checklist system can pretty well guarantee the success of any business, making sure necessary steps are taken accurately and consistently for any project.

How many times have I heard from service businesses that "checklists" are for manufacturers? I have just one word for that ... bologna!

Did I mention—Great Systems Work!

To invite Philip Paul Beyer to speak for your conference or other event...

Contact Susan Beyer at Ebiz Products, 615-425-2652 or email susan@ebizproducts.com. Philip Beyer's book *System Busters: How to Stop Them In Your Business* is available at www.Amazon.com. For more about SYSTEM100™ software, visit www.System100.com.