

### Change is hard.

A few weeks ago, I was scrolling through Facebook. For my demographic (old), Facebook is still an acceptable thing. I just see who is doing what or what people think is important enough to comment about. Since I rarely comment, my niece refers to me as a “lurker”. There was, however, a comment that I could not help but comment. The comment referred to the fact that the writer thought that self-checkout was the worst thing in the history of the planet. The comment went something like this: Any business that uses self-checkout is terrible; they were created by mean spirited big box businesses to cheat workers out of jobs, save money and screw over customers. The resulting comments were exactly what I expected-total agreement. Everybody agreed that the large chain stores that used them were evil and cheap. In addition, folks seemed to be offended that they were being forced to do something that wasn't their job-scanning the items. It was a very easy bandwagon for folks to jump on. Every now and then (OK, a lot of the time) I will hop up on a soap box and have a little rant. I couldn't help myself, I had to comment. I pointed out that if people didn't like the self-checkout, they could either not use them in the store because there usually is at least one live cashier or not use the store at all. Mom and Pop stores tend to not have the money to invest in technology, so they tend to not use self-checkout. I pointed out that most of them will not go to a Mom and Pop because they tend to be more expensive. So, we will complain about the lack of high-touch customer service but trade at the big box because it is more cost efficient. Remember, I said most, I didn't mean you. Labor saving? Perhaps, but only on the surface; after all, somebody has to design the self-checkout machine, program the machine, build the machine, and maintain the machine. So why do most people not like it? Is it the lack of human interaction? For some, my wife included, I would say yes. I think she has a sign on her forehead that says, “Tell me all about it”. She can go through a checkout line with ten items and by the time she is done she will know about the cashier's mean neighbors, uncaring spouse, and sick mother. Me, not so much. My daughter tells me my forehead sign would say, “Unapproachable”. So, I am quite happy to interface with a little machine that goes “BEEP” when I properly scan an item.

I did a little research on what people might have against the self-checkout might be and the common answer was not understanding the tech. I don't buy it; how difficult is it to slide an item past a scanner? I think the reason is much more simple; change. It is different from what we are used to. Change is a fact of life; it is a fact of business. Is all change for the better? No. Anybody remember New Coke? (For you Millennials and Gen Z's, ask your parents) As much of a debacle as New Coke turned out to be, I really can't help but admire the company. After all, they were the number one soft drink and there they were, trying to improve! Back then, I could burn calories faster than I could consume them and I drank Coke like it was water. I, like most, couldn't stand New Coke. So, after 3 months of consumer complaining, Coke brought the old Coke back and called it Coke classic. They did this even though year-over-year sales were up 8%

for the three-month period. Some, but not most, of the sales increase was due to people buying up the remaining original formula stock. When people said that they made a huge business error to change the formula, they responded that they were not that stupid (and I am sure they had the research to back that up). When people said that it was all one big marketing stunt, they responded that they were not that smart. I am sure they had the market research that said they were doing the right thing. The market research probably consisted of blind taste tests. The data failed to take into consideration people's reluctance to change.

The Minnesota State Auctioneer's Association is about to undergo a change and I must say that I am not happy about it. While Presidents and Directors have come and gone, ever since I have been a member of this association, there has been one constant: EVP Frank Imholte. Frank has announced his retirement and the process is underway to find his replacement. Pretty big shoes if you ask me. To just say, "Thanks Frank" hardly seems sufficient but, thanks Frank! This won't be a cakewalk; Lord only knows the stuff Frank takes care of that nobody really knows about. The association will get through it, I'll get through it. It just won't be fun. Change is hard.

**Ray Caruso**

MSAA Director