



Go Off-Script

I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT SHE IS GOING to say, I thought as I watched the woman in front of me put her receipt into her wallet, and bid farewell to the cashier at the grocery store. As she turned toward her cart and walked away, I slowly inched forward, ready to claim my spot at the cash register, and begin the scripted banter with the cashier. *Not only do I know exactly what she is going to say, but I can also hear the tone of her voice. This is like a script. Here we go in three, two, one.*

"Well hi there, how are you?!" She launched into her scripted lines with a most likely well-practiced and forced smile, demonstrating far more enthusiasm than she probably felt at 5:41 on a busy Wednesday evening.

I, likewise, smiled a large, overzealous smile and responded with the same scripted words I used every time. She could probably guess in advance the exact flow of the conversation.

"I'm doing well thank you, how are you?" I responded.

"Well fine, thank you. Did you find everything you were looking for?" she asked.

"I did, thank you." I said.

"Alrighty then, would you like paper, plastic or did you bring your own?" she asked, never quite making direct eye contact.

"Plastic, please," I replied, noting that my voice tripped over a small self-imposed roadblock of shame. Was I ever going to remember to bring in my reusable grocery bags? They were crumpled up in a pile in my trunk, the same place they had been for the past 10 months. I had placed them there thinking if they were in the car, they would always be with me and I could grab them whenever I went into the store. Without fail, as if pre-written in a script, I always forgot them, and ended up selecting plastic, justifying that I could at least reuse them as garbage bags.

"Receipt with you or in the bag?" she asked, as she ripped the thin strip of white paper from the register and turned back toward me.

As I reached for the receipt, I tried to beat her to the punch. "Thank you! Have a great night," I said as I tucked the receipt into my pocket and reached for my plastic bag. Grasping the handles and lifting it off of the counter, I began to walk away, when I heard her say to the next customer, "Well hi there, how are you?!"

Walking through the parking lot, my mind lingered on the cashier. She had worked at the grocery store for years, and I had shopped there for years. I had been in her line three times that week, and had the exact same scripted conversation with her each time. It made me kind of sad as I realized I couldn't tell you one thing about who she was, her history, or any of the events that had shaped her into the person she was now. Though I recognized her, I didn't really know anything about her.

Now granted, the grocery store checkout line, with a stream of people waiting impatiently behind me, and a load of groceries to get home, is no place to sit and get to know someone, but it did make me wonder how many people we see and interact with on a regular basis, who we "talk" to, but never really get to know.

Getting to know someone takes time and effort, but it is so rewarding. It can't be done overnight, and, apparently, it can't be done in a grocery store checkout line, but it is something that usually brings with it fascinating revelations and discoveries. Those people on the perimeter of our lives, who seem to be fixtures when we stop by the store, cross paths with them in the office lobby, or see when we walk into the library, have so much more to them than we experience in the scripted lines we exchange. They are people with joys and heartaches, hopes and dreams, fears and frustrations. These people all have stories of what makes them, well, them!

When I think of all of the people I have gotten to know better through this job, simply by having the chance to sit down with them for an interview, whether it is five minutes or two hours, I am taken aback. And when I think that each of these people could have been one that I might otherwise have passed on the street with nothing more than a scripted, "Well hi there, how are you?" it makes me realize that we all have such interesting stories to share, but we need the right opportunity and venue in which to sit and share. In this busy life, though, we don't often have, nor take, time to sit and share with one another.

Let us help you! One of my greatest joys in putting together this magazine is not just finding stories to share with you, but getting to know the people who bring those stories to life. I hope that in reading each issue, you feel you've been able to go off-script, to sit and learn more about the people who make this such a great place to live. Consider this magazine your opportunity to get to know the people you "talk" to everyday. Read on, you'll be amazed to hear what they have to say!

Blythe

P.S. Our sister publication, *Inland Business Catalyst*, is now part of *Spokane Couer d'Alene Living*! We'll be bringing you business articles each month. See it on page 146.