

CELL PHONE CHECKOUT

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Is it just me or are people becoming dumber than a sack of hammers? Blame what you will, be it the internet, Facebook, Google, cell phones, or lack of education; but today people are just rude, crude and socially unacceptable.

I pride myself on seldom being rude, but some situations just demand it.

On 30 December 2010, I was in line to pay for my selections at Sam's Club.

The woman, in front of me, was talking on her cell phone — interrupting that conversation only when she *really* had to answer a question from the lady cashier who was diligently scanning her items.

The young teenage cashier was doing her best to keep a professional composure, but I could tell that the woman's rudeness was rubbing her the wrong way.

When it came time to pay and seeing that the woman had a card in her hand, the cashier asked, "Is that card a debit or a credit card?"

First, the woman asked the person on the other end of the phone, "Joan, please, wait a minute." Then, in an indigent tone, she asked the cashier, "What difference does it make?"

The cashier answered politely, "It determines which register key I press so you can use the card."

"Well, it's a Visa credit card," the woman replied haughtily.

Without pausing, the woman said to the cell phone, "Hang on, honey. I'll be right with you."

The cashier stated, "We don't accept Visa credit cards."

"Well," the woman retorted, "I'm going to swipe it just to be sure." She gave the cashier that "don't tell me what I can and can not do; I'm stupid and I prefer to demonstrate it anytime I can" look.

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Sure enough, the card scanner rejected the Visa card.

"It says, 'Invalid card'" the woman all but screamed. "I just used that card to check out at Walmart. The card is valid!"

Softly chuckling, the cashier said, "But we don't accept Visa so it's not valid here."

"Why not?" the woman demanded.

"I'm not sure," the cashier replied softly. "Would you like me to call the manager."

At this point, my usual patient self intervened. I looked right at the woman who appeared to be seeking my support for her rude behavior. "Lady, if you've got another card, use it. If not, let me talk to Joyce on your stupid cell phone while you drag out a simple checkout into an all day siege!"

The woman's jaw dropped, her eyes got wider than the gulf between the Democrats and Republicans in Congress, and she mumbled unintelligible words to no one in particular.

"WHAT?" she finally managed to ask me.

With my usual grace and candor, I replied, "Lady, when I got into this line behind you, it was 2 days until the New Year. Now we've got 1 day left. Give me your cell phone and I'll ask Joyce to loan you the money."

The cashier was chuckling so hard her chest was heaving up and down, but she did her best to keep her composure. Softly, the cashier interjected, "Ma'am, do you have another card?"

"Well, I certainly do!" the woman sneered at the cashier and stared at me while her left hand rummaged through her purse perched precariously on the counter's edge. Her right hand still held the cell phone with Joyce on the other end who must have been wondering what was going on.

"I could hold your cell phone if you'd like." I offered.

Without another word, she swiped her other credit card through the machine. Then she switched her cell phone to her left hand so she could scribble her name onto the machine. Fortunately, there was no requirement to ensure she had spelled it correctly.

The cashier showing that plastic smile they teach in Sales 101, handed her a receipt and cheerfully offered, "Thank you for shopping at Sam's Club."

Walking away, half the store heard the woman yell into the cell phone, "Joyce, you will *not* believe what just happened to me!"

I handed the cashier my Sam's Club card and complimented her, "You handled what could have been a very ugly confrontation with great poise."

"Thank you," she replied and scanned my items one after the other.

Then, as I showed her my MasterCard and scanned it, she nodded. She smiled and chuckled as she handed me my receipt, "You made my day."

"Ah," I nodded. "And you created a great story for me. Be great."