



# Getting a face lift

I took off for a weekend last month just to reflect and recall the past year. While more of us should do this more often, some take it to extremes, like Marc Weems and his wife from Plano, Texas. They took time off and then made the big jump to the island of Vieques off the coast of Puerto Rico, to live. They now own the most successful locksmith shop on the island called “Vieques Locksmith” and has me wondering “Why didn’t I think of that?”

Of course we all can’t move there and be locksmiths on this little rock of an island, but it is important to look back and take a mental inventory of your life, your business, your family and your faith and where you want to be in the future. So I would like to encourage each of you take time to rethink your last year and then give a little “grist for the mill” in planning for a successful coming year.

A good friend of our family has worked for Radio Shack for decades and has shared some of their research with us on store remodeling and updating of their brand. Basically what Radio Shack found was during the 1970’s and 1980’s the store concept was called a “Brown store.” That means the carpet was brown, the shelves were brown wood Formica, the walls were beige in color, and everything was heavy on the earth tones.

However, during the early 1990’s they systematically began to update all their stores to the “Grey store” concept. They replaced the carpet with a thin pile commercial grade grey, updated the tile to a much lighter color, replaced all the

shelving with grey and chrome, and painted the walls with a fresh clean white. They then replaced light fixtures in the ceiling and spot lighted the products, and also updated the logo and brought better signage inside the store with clear prices on the items.

Once a “Brown store” had finished remodeling and was a “Grey store” Radio Shack noticed almost a 20% jump in sales on each completed store. Needless to say the 1990’s were very good to Radio Shack.

In retail stores a freshening up of the store is done on average about every 5 years. That means fresh paint, new carpet, cleaned and resealed tile, and a fresh look at inventory. Every 10 years a new concept is brought to the retail showroom, such as the Brown Store vs. the Grey Store.

I have seen many locksmith stores across the country and in most states. Based on my informal research the 5 year and 10 year concept store has been postponed for decades. (I could even say centuries!) Many locksmith shops have never been remodeled since they were opened.

My families’ locksmith shop had not been remodeled since its opening in the early 1980’s. The carpet was originally red, but had become more of a burgundy brown color. The walls were a stale cream color. The shelves were varnished plywood or carpeted. Then came Hurricane Charley and the opportunity to remodel and update presented itself out of necessity.

Out went the now wet soaked carpet and replaced with that epoxy coating that is used on garage

floors. They found it much easier to move safes in and out and also keep clean (or maybe it just hid the dirt with the speckles). The walls received a fresh coat of semi gloss white paint. All the broken ceiling tiles were replaced and chrome shelving was installed to feature smaller commercial products. They also took a look at their turn ratio of commercial products and found they were not carrying items in stock that we really should have been carrying. Their wholesale supplier made it too easy for them to swing by and pick it up or receive it the next day, as opposed to having it in stock that it actually become a crutch and kept them weak. They would get phone calls for a storeroom function lever set and would answer “we don’t have it in stock, but we can get one for you pretty quick.” Then would then never hear from them again.

Once they started carrying more items in stock the conversation changed and more customers would come in to purchase products. They then started to buy in bulk when their wholesalers would offer these items on sale. They would look at what they would sell over a 4-6 month period and then place the order. It pinched them in the pocket book at first, but really helped to increase sales and profitability once they got serious about our inventory.

We still have a side of us that is very jealous of Mark Weems down on a Caribbean island doing locksmith work between fishing, tanning, and unofficial ministry of rum social chairman. Mark, God loves you, and we’re jealous!