

Supermarket Sweep

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I'm Lucy, I work at Tesco's in the checkout assistance, 'scan as you shop'. It was really hard in the beginning, back in the middle of March, before the pandemic even hit us, while everything you saw on the news was actually happening at our store: from customers queuing at 5:30 in the morning to panic-buying of toilet rolls and hand sanitiser.

I saw people become selfish, I saw them in a different light, some even grabbing shopping out of other people's baskets. Customers became scared that they couldn't get what they needed; on one day we counted 650 customers in the store at the same time! We'd open the doors and the queue would ram in. I thought "if this is what it's like here in our small and cosy town, how are people coping in big cities?" My cat lived on very posh cat food for a while as that was all that was left!



My family life was hard too as I was the only one leaving the house to go to work. I felt scared of the pandemic and very unsure about what was going to happen next. The atmosphere at work with so many angry customers could feel threatening and my family found it very hard seeing me upset when I came home from work, crying. But they always managed to pick me up with a hug and a smile. Thankfully I have a wonderful friendship with my work colleagues and we call each other our second family.

One day an elderly gentleman came into Tesco for some bananas and paracetamol. He was about to leave with nothing so I went over to him to ask if he was ok and he explained that he couldn't get his two items. So the following day I started early and managed to get his bananas and gave him some paracetamol that I had at home. I didn't tell him that they were mine. He was so appreciative, he cried and I welled up, but these were happy tears.

By April things started to improve, people started to come together. My job changed a lot due to measures that have been put in to place to protect staff and the public. We can be put anywhere from being outside making sure the queue is working and customers are staying a safe distance apart to counting customers in and out as we are only allowed 80 in the store at a time. It used to be a case of 'the customer is always right, always comes first'. We've all had to adapt to being in control of how customers shop here to ensure we can keep social distancing for both them and us while also making sure they have had a good and safe experience while shopping.

And now, so much positive has come out of this for us working in Tesco. Most, if not all the customers are lovely. We have had cards, chocolates and gifts and they always say thank you and appreciate what we do which, sadly, previous to the pandemic, was not always the case. A lovely regular customer made us key rings. They are made of wood and shaped like a shopping basket which is engraved with:

"Thank you for your service, you are heroes too".

I feel like suddenly a whole world of people like us, people who are in so-called 'lower skilled' jobs are being properly appreciated for what we do!

By Lucy, May 2020