

SPEAKING NOTES

When I was originally given the opportunity to speak today I wasn't told that I needed to fill roughly 10 minutes of time, and so when I sat down to put some notes together I quickly realized that I could go one of two ways, I could spend a really large amount of time talking about myself and career followed with a quick blurb about how and why you must all make use of the amazing programs that the CCRW has to offer , or I could simply show 8 minutes of incredibly funny cat videos that I found on YouTube, I'll let you figure out which way out went...

My name is DAX KURTZ and I was Born and raised in small town Saskatchewan, Where my father was the School principal and my mother the school secretary. So when things when bad at school they had a way of going very bad when I got home.

I started my first job working in the town's only grocery store, where a typical day involved me being the cashier, grocery clerk , receiver, box boy, and cart collector, and when the boss was away balancing the days receipts and doing the deposit. And now that I think back to it, at \$3.65 per hour he may have been taking advantage of me!

I attended Lakeland College, where I completed a degree in Business Administration, and quickly realized I had no desire to be an accountant, appraiser, or any other office jobs that applied... however I had kept working retail as a side job all the way through school and thought I would just stick with that until something better came along... That was 27 years ago... Now I know what your thinking I am much to young looking for 27 years in retail... well its only because I started when I was 10.

Like most retail jobs I started at the bottom, unloading trucks in a Canadian Tire store in Lloydminster Alberta and after lots of hard work and about 6 months, I was offered to go with the owner to a office supervisor position in his new Store in New Glasgow NS, and after lots of hard work and about 4 years I was offered a position to go the corporate office In Toronto where I travelled weekly for the company visiting and working with stores from one end of the country to the other, so after lots hard work and about 950 flights and 8 years. I was offered a position to manage a store in Scarborough Ontario which later relocated to Markham, and so as I am sure you can guess after lots of hard work and 8 years I was offered a position with Giant Tiger to go back East and open my own store in New Minas Ns and become the franchise owner, and so 7 years later that's where I am, and notice I didn't say after lots of hard work, because I am still at it. So the point I guess I was trying to make in telling this painfully long drawn out story, is that the common factor in my success just like anyone else's is always "After Lots of hard work" the opportunity presented itself, I didn't go looking for it , it came to me.

At home I have a blended family that consists of my partner Lisa and 5 awfully loud and demanding children, 4 girls and one boy ranging in age from 20, in university and into football players two twin 2 year old girls in diapers and into everything! Needless to say Lots of hard work is least of my problems.

Giant Tiger is a 100% Canadian Owned company , founded by Mr Gordon Reid right down the street in the Byward market back in 1961 and today we have stores coast to coast, numbering 240 and more opening all the time.

The New Minas NS location which I operate is located in a primarily agricultural area known as the Annapolis valley, well known for its rich agriculture roots, famous for its apples, and fruit orchards and more recently award winning wineries and vineyards.

My store has a staff of 27, annual sales of 8 million, and is just over 20,000 sq feet, I would describe Giant Tiger to someone who has never been in one as similar to Walmart only smaller but with staff who care!

I was once told early on in my career that there are two types of Retailers. Cheap and really Cheap, and while I am not sure which category I fall into, even though I do have a hunch, the point I am trying to make is this, the retail market as we know it is more competitive now than ever before, we are all fighting for that customers attention, and with more and more business going online, now more than ever we need to find ways to reduce costs and operate a step ahead of our competitors. Truly only the fast adapting, lean operating retailers will survive. Add to that the ever elusive, hard to attract and hold onto employee, that wants to work hard work, treat customers well, and generally loves what they do, because we all know if you love what you do it will make work the easiest part of your day.

So here's the sales pitch!

I learned a long time ago that there were wonderful programs out there that would work with me to help me find, screen , develop and train staff , and not only that they would pay me to participate in there programs. Incredible as this seems it's all true!

Here's the proof

In my first 5 years of business, In my tiny little store, in the middle of now where, working with organizations like the CCRW I took to the bank \$60,000 in subsidy funding, in my best year of those 5 my take was \$33,000. For a small business fighting to be competitive these numbers are huge, they represent bottom line dollar reduction in my wage expenses. I run historically one of the best productivity percentages of any store within Giant Tiger, and now you know my secret. But it's not just the money. The program and my local CCRW office, know what my needs are, they understand who I am looking for, they understand what qualities, and competencies my staff need. They pre-screen candidates for me, saving me all the time of sorting through resumes and applications and when they find the right one, all it takes is a phone call and I set up an interview, I have that much faith in the program, the screening and my local office knowing what I need. They are in almost every scenario my first call when I need to fill a vacancy, and they know if or when they find that shining star, to call me first, and I will find a spot, because shining stars in today's work force are getting harder to find.

Candidates working with the CCRW undoubtedly have an unfair advantage over anyone coming through my front door. The reasons are simple, they come with funding attached, I like to call it free trial money, Most of the time it works but sometimes it doesn't and when it doesn't it helps offset the costs of starting up a new employee, the training and development only for it to end a month or two later. But the other thing free trial money does is it allows me to take a chance on someone I might not ordinarily take a chance on, it reduces my risk, it lets me listen a little less to my gut and a little more to my heart, to just see. Those are exciting! To see someone be given a chance and have them flourish when you thought they would fail.

Every placement doesn't work, nothing ever does, I know what your thinking I am using the programs to cash in on easy money and then kick them to the curb, wrong. At our peak 42% of all my staff were the result of some type of program, currently 33% of my staff are the result of a program. The staff who join me from a program, are typically harder working, have longer careers with us, generally are happier to come to work every day, and treat my customers as they would want to be treated... They bring value to me

And just when you think it can't get any warmer or fuzzier it does. The successes, I have had staff who have risen up through the CCRW programs to go on to do amazing things simply because we were able to give them a start, the confidence, skills, and experience to know they are capable of much more. I have had staff move on to new careers in the Military, Paralegal, Nurses Aid, Retail Supervisors, and many more.

I want to share one favourite success story with you. I had a fellow, that joined me during the construction phase of the store. He was a single dad, with a son who had severe Autism, He choose to leave the workforce to be the best dad he could be by staying at home and caring for his very young son all by himself, he ended up on assistance, living in community housing and barely scraping by. As time passed his son grew and it was time to get back to work, problem is without working for years, no fresh experience he couldn't find work, he didn't even have a resume. Enter the program, with their help he got a fresh resume, practiced interviews, and had a coach that worked with him and even drove him to appointments. He joined me as a temp worker to help setup the store, but very quickly we realized that he had skills well beyond what he could do with a screwdriver or hammer, he was outgoing, personable, helpful and would do absolutely anything to help us succeed. There was no question; we needed him as much as he needed us. The relationship began and flourished for 7 years. He worked himself through the ranks and ultimately held keys to the store, could open or close the entire operation on his own and was responsible for many core duties within the store. But the truly great things are what happened to him outside of work, He got remarried, he had another son, he got a car, and then another, he could afford to get his kids into sports and take family vacations , he was no longer on assistance but rather supported his family. The pride, confidence and responsibility had rebuilt him to a new person. He recently left my employment to a tremendous opportunity working for Michelin Canada where his pay doubled and he is now saving for his own home, something that was not even in the realm of possibility just 7 years ago. Not a week goes by where my customers don't stop me and ask about him, how he's doing or what he's up to. All of this success for both him and I started with a hand up from a program like the CCRW and of course lots of hard work from him.

If I have not convinced you at this point of the incredible value that the CCRW brings to both employers and employees, I'll leave you with this,

1. You can get pre-screened, vetted applicants who have the skill sets you are looking for.
Your saving time
2. They come with money attached to help train, and develop and get them underway.
Your saving money
3. Your community will recognize you as an inclusive, accepting, equal opportunity employer.
Your saving the world.