



Tailoring to customers' needs key to **100 years of success**

Walter Beauchamp Tailors has been servicing its clients with fine bespoke garments since 1908 and continue to thrive today. According to Owner Terry Beauchamp, focus on quality product and service and understanding the customer has been the key to more than 100 years of success.

BY SEAN C. TARRY

Started in 1908 by Walter Beauchamp Sr. and his business partner Alf How, the company has lived through a lot - two world wars, the depression, a multitude of economic recessions, 19 different Prime Ministers, and a gamut of fashion styles and trends. And yet, throughout all of this, the store - one of the pioneer retailers on Wellington Street West in Toronto's Entertainment District - has not only been able to maintain an impressive degree of success right up to present day, but has in fact grown in notoriety and prestige among its clientele. How have they done this, you might ask?

"Our company has remained consistently focused on who we are, on the quality of our product and on the level of service that we provide our customers," explains Terry Beauchamp, Owner and grandson of the company's founder. "When people come in here, they know that they're going to find great product and they're going to be treated the way they prefer to be treated. They appreciate the way we deal with them as customers. I don't think a lot of companies today focus on that aspect of premium customer service."

HISTORIC APPEAL

The store has been providing that premium customer service since its inception - a time when every suit was bespoke, because there weren't any stock suits in those days.

"At that time," explains Terry, "when gentlemen needed suits, they would come in and get measured and we would make patterns. Shortly after Alf and my grandfather set up the business, the First World War began to escalate, and we really got going as a military tailor."

The store quickly became known for the work that it did as a civil and military tailor, servicing the Canadian Forces uniform needs. A reputation, and work, that remains with the store to the present.

"During the First World War we were doing all various types of uniforms, which we still do today," he explains. "We



uniformed the Canadian military during the Second World War, the Korean War, and right up to the present. It's something that customers find very interesting and provides the store with a little extra appeal."

Over the last couple years, Terry points out, Walter Beauchamp Tailors have been doing a lot more work for the military. For the 150th anniversary of the Queen's Own Rifles, regimented in Toronto, Terry and his team outfitted the regalia's various ranks.

"We're very proud of our military heritage and connection," beams Terry. "It's not only something that sets us apart from other tailors here or anywhere for that matter. But, it's also a way that we've been able to entrench ourselves within the history of the community and the country."

AN 'OLD SCHOOL' FLAVOUR

Terry's worked in the store since the early 1970's, learning the trade for 25 years under his father and previous owner Walter Jr. before taking over the business. And, if there's one thing



that he learned during that time, he says, it's to know your customers intimately and cater your offering to their needs.

"We're a very tactile company," he says. "We don't do a lot of e-commerce. Customers are able to visit our website to find out about the company and the custom tailoring and services that we offer, but we aren't very high tech. We're a little more 'old world' than some people might be used to. But it's something that really resonates with our customers, both young and old."

That tactile approach, which involves clients selecting everything from the style and colour of the suit to the kind of material used to tailor the look that they're seeking, is definitely a throwback to simpler times. But it's also an element of the business that keeps them rooted in the present, distinguishing them from their competitors.

"We're told over and over again by many of our customers, those who have been coming to us for years and people who may be new to the store, that they can't find this level of service with the kind of human touch that we provide anywhere else," he says modestly but with pride. "I think there's really something to be said about that. We treat each and every customer that we serve with respect and a touch of class - everyone is treated at the same level, despite who they are."

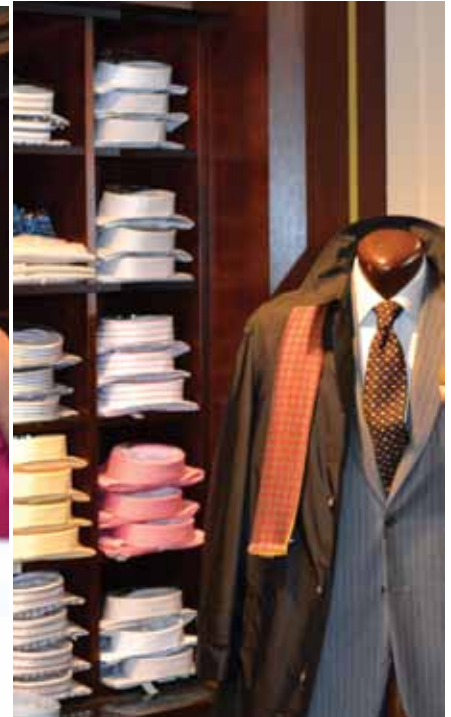
BACKING UP THE SERVICE

In addition to the service that's provided in-store, Terry explains, the follow-up that customers receive is also a huge benefit to the company. Courtesy calls to find out how a client liked their new suit or to make them aware of a new product that's just come in to the store, Terry says, goes a long way with his clients. And if the customer isn't happy with the quality of the garment it will be fixed, remade or refunded - a guarantee that Walter Beauchamp Tailors has maintained since it opened for business shortly after the turn of the twentieth century.

"It doesn't happen often," explains Terry with a big smile on his face. "People are usually very happy with the product that they receive here. But, since we do everything we can to make sure that we produce the best quality garment possible at the fairest price possible, we also make sure that we back that up with a guarantee to fix or modify something if the customer isn't completely satisfied with their purchase."

The store, which services clientele as varied and eclectic as you'll find anywhere else, also serves the odd celebrity - a byproduct of being Toronto's longest standing custom bespoke tailor which Terry takes in stride.

"We've had a lot of people come into the store through the years," he reminisces. "We used to make the famous double-breasted white suits for Harland (Colonel) Sanders. That look became part of his persona, and it's nice to look back and see that we had a hand in that."



Walter Beauchamp Tailors also service the needs of a number of other current high profile clients, from musicians and stars of the silver screen to politicians.

“You never know who’s going to be in the store,” Terry muses.

FULFILLING UNIQUE CUSTOMER NEEDS

Even the most eccentric and extravagant of tastes can be satisfied at Walter Beauchamp Tailors. And, they certainly have had their share of unusual requests.

“It’s simple,” says Terry. “If the customer has a vision for a garment and a willingness to see it through, we can make it for them. I don’t see why we wouldn’t.”

One particular request came from a gentleman from Africa. He entered the store and approached Terry with a picture of Haile Selassie – former Emperor of Ethiopia – and asked if he could have a coat made like the one the African leader wore. It was a military-style look with medals decorating the breast and tassels adorning the shoulders.

“Of course we did it,” says Terry, cheerfully. “And it turned out beautifully. He was thrilled. He wrote a nice letter to thank me, which I kept.”

Terry also told of the fellow who asked if he could have a pirate’s suit made for his wedding.

“I remember he worked for a design company. The suit that he wanted was a brocaded frock coat; silk with fluffy pirate sleeves – the whole nine yards. He drew it and we made it.”

In addition, the store outfits the Shaw Festival and the Stratford Festival with many items of theatrical wardrobe as well as tailoring attire for the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

It’s this attention to the needs of the customer and the dedication and commitment to meet those needs that not only ensures repeat business for Walter Beauchamp Tailors, it also serves to grow the store’s customer-base.



GOOD NEWS TRAVELS FAST

Beauchamp Tailors has a website – www.walterbeauchamp.com – where customers can research information about the company, including store hours, location, material and style options and the company’s history. They also send email notices and direct mail pieces to their preferred customers. But, aside from that, the marketing that they execute is limited. However, it seems to work for the store.

“We believe in the old cliché – 20 per cent of your clients give you 80 per cent of your business,” Terry says, explaining the store’s philosophy. “So, we track and really look after that 20 per cent. Our best advertising is word of mouth. When that 20 per cent continuously experiences exceptional service with us, they’re going to continue telling people that they meet about us. The power of word of mouth is huge. Often people say to me, ‘so-and-so sent me here.’ As a retailer, this is what you want. When someone is referred to the store through a friend or an acquaintance, they’re preconditioned to buy. It’s up to us when they come in to the store to provide them with the level of service that they’ve heard about and make a sale.”



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Walter Beauchamp Tailors is also involved in the community – an investment and participation that Terry argues is not a decision, but an obligation of doing business today.

“Becoming and staying involved in the community that you serve is hugely important,” he says confidently. “It has to be a part of your overall business plan. You can’t just be in business for yourself.”

Terry and the Beauchamp family have a trust fund set up in his brother Bruce’s name – The Bruce Beauchamp Memorial Fund – which many of the store’s customers support. Bruce passed away after a fight against pancreatic cancer in 1989. The fund has now generated more than \$500,000 which is donated to various causes every year, including the Terry Fox Fund, the Canadian Diabetes Association, the Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation and a multitude of others.

“We’ve donated more than \$250,000 since the fund’s incep-

tion,” Terry says. “That’s one way that we’ve put back into our community. The way we see it, you have to be prepared to do what’s best for your clients, your employees and the community that you live in. It’s all part in parcel.”

A MEASURED APPROACH

With a rich 103-year history of providing exceptional service to their customers, and a penchant to continue delivering to meet their needs, Walter Beauchamp Tailors remains the fine garment purveyor of choice for many residents in Toronto today. And, it takes but one conversation with Terry Beauchamp to fully understand why the store’s success will certainly continue for many more years to come.

“We are here to serve the customer,” he says, wearing a smile on his face that’s become familiar after spending only an hour with him in his store. “When they come see us, they want to be treated with class, respect and discretion. That’s what we provide for them. We always have.”

UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the storied history and tradition of this 100-plus year-old tailor, there’s also a very unique cross-promotion that is happening at the store.

During Terry’s travels in Quebec City a number of years ago he came across an art gallery by the name of Beauchamp Art Gallery. Aside from his love of fine art, the name drew him into the gallery where he met the owner of the gallery, Vincent Beauchamp. Because Vincent is French-Canadian, the pronunciation is different. But Terry immediately saw an opportunity.

“I learned that he had eight magnificent art galleries in Quebec. He and I became acquainted and then became

friends,” he explains. “A little while later the space next to me became available and I asked Vincent, ‘why don’t you open a gallery in Toronto?’”

The rest, as they say, is history. Vincent leased the space, set up his gallery, and the dividends each Beauchamp now receives is extraordinary.

“He has customers all over Canada,” explains Terry with a grin. “He’s come up to Toronto and we’re cross marketing. When people enter his gallery they soon enough learn about what we do as tailors. And we return the favour, turning suit seekers into art buyers. It’s a true Canadian success story – a French-Canadian and

English-Canadian working together in harmony,” he laughs.

The store also does work with the Ritz Carlton and are always looking at ways to do additional cross-promoting.

“This is what you have to do today to remain relevant and to continue growing,” he says. “There are so many unique opportunities out there to promote your name and your offering and to help out another member of the community. This is one of the areas that we’ll be concentrating on going into the future.”

For more information about Walter Beauchamp Tailors, visit the company’s website at www.walterbeauchamp.com, or call 416-595-5454.