Top 4 Things That Help Build Customer Loyalty



Building Customer Loyalty

Marketing experts and business consultants who help companies win more market share always urge clients to focus on building customer loyalty. Why does everyone keep harping on customer loyalty?

It’s because loyal customers return repeatedly resulting in you making money. They spend more at your store because they trust your products and customer service. They tell everyone to come to your business because they’ve always had a good experience. Loyal customers are the cheapest, most effective advertising you can find.

So there you go. You want to build customer loyalty. How do you do it? Here are four surefire ways to increase the number of people who put money in your cash register.

1) Get to know your customers and develop close relationships

First, consider yourself a trusted partner and friend to every customer who walks through the door. There are several ways to do this.

Take the time to get to know the people who come into your business. Talk to them, share a little of yourself, ask them about family and what kind of work they

do. If they are buying an item that creates an entry into conversation, use it. Conversation is paramount to building customer loyalty.

Go the extra mile for the customer. If they are buying a large item, help them put it in the trunk of their car or call over an employee to help them and introduce the two. That's another human connection on which to build relationships.

Act as if each customer is a VIP customer, and give every customer your best service, regardless of how much money they spend.

Remember the customer's names; when they return, pick up the conversation where it left off the last time they were in your business. Ask about the product or service they purchased. How did they like it?

Entrepreneur.com puts it this way: "You stay connected with them and give them value, and they'll touch other people who will seek your business."

2) Start a customer loyalty program

By now, you're most likely aware of this method. Everyone from credit card companies and gas stations to sub shops and clothing stores have a loyalty reward program of some sort. To sign up, customers provide information such as name and address, birthdate, phone number, email address, etc. In exchange, the loyalty program helps the customer earn purchase points that can be redeemed for products/ services your business sells, or for affinity rewards: local concert tickets, theme park admission, dinners at favorite restaurants, the list goes on. Customers are loyal to rewards programs because they don't want to miss out on those points. This is a surefire method for retaining customers, building customer loyalty, and that pays off.

Repeat customers spend 67 percent more than new customers in the long run, so it's important to make a great first impression and get those new customers to stay. In fact, "A 5 percent increase in retention yields profit increases of 25 to 100 percent," says global management consultant firm Bain and Co.

3) Promote Positive Customer Feedback

It's easy to get feedback: Just ask your customers. You can ask them to fill out a paper comment form at the counter, you can ask them to post something on your

business Facebook page, or send an email to you via the company website.

Feedback tells you how customers perceive you, how well they were treated by you, whether your store was attractive and easy to navigate, and whether they found what they were looking for. You can then create ads from those customer testimonials for print or direct mail marketing or post the comments onto social media platforms.

Don’t ignore negative comments, however. Simply reply to the comments and turn it into a positive conversation

You can also ask customers as they are checking out how they liked your business. Ask if there are any products they’d like to see on your shelves, and if they found everything they were looking for. Doing this tells customers you care, helps you create closer relationships and gives you information to potentially improve your business.

According to DIYThemes.com, if you want to encourage honest feedback allow customers to submit anonymous comments. Anonymous contributions will help you get inside the mind of all of your customers. It’s not a bad idea to offer some kind of gift, perhaps a free desert, for customers who take the time to fill out a comment card.

4) Be the industry leader (or at least act like one)

In other words, your business has to stand out and be perceived at the forefront of new ways of conducting the business you are in. If you want real customer loyalty, you must be seen as unique, attached to the issues your community faces, and be at the forefront of change.

Does your town have a homeless problem? Let customers donate a portion of their sales tax to a homeless shelter. If you own a restaurant, use only locally grown vegetables in your menu.

Provide cutting edge products to your inventory. If you own an auto-repair shop, start servicing cars that run on biodiesel or other natural fuel. To be a thought leader, write an op-ed for the local paper regarding something new in your industry. So says Relevance.com: “In fact, you should view any news or industry change as an opportunity to show your company is an expert and actually has an

opinion—and a good one at that.”

Another way to build customer loyalty is by introducing new technology to your business. At Our Town America, a New Mover Direct Mail Marketing company, we introduced the TruTrak® ™ app that businesses download to their smartphone. It helps businesses track the response of their mailed new mover gift certificates.

But for your business, use your imagination! Creating awareness about social responsibility, introducing new techniques and joining in community improvement programs creates goodwill in perspective customers. They identify with active members of the community and your business will be known as one that is engaged with the community.

So all in all, you must build relationships with your customers, your neighbors, and your community. Engage and reward loyal customers, and be inventive.