

Winning Over the Customer

The competition for customer loyalty is a daily battle being fought in the marketing and sales arena with increasing vigor. The idea of customer loyalty has more or less been abandoned (although no one will admit it) as consumers enjoy a market full of alternative choices and price wars. Some companies have met this by reducing their offer or their service in order to lower prices, while others have decreased their marketing budgets and settle for the percentage of the huge market that will be theirs by default.

The business challenge is winning over the customer in an environment where the customer is resistant to overtures and uninterested in demonstrating loyalty over their immediate interests of price and value. Tudog has evaluated this market based dilemma and has come up with 6 recommendations that, if implemented, will win over the customer and renew their willingness to commit to a product – your product.

The six recommendations are:

1. Recognize Your Customers

More than your employees, your suppliers, or your bankers, your customers are the engine that drives your business. Many companies pay lip service to this apparent fact of business, but consumers are savvy and see through insincere efforts. You can win over your customers by demonstrating that you recognize their central role in your success through an increase in service and the establishment of a friendly, helpful, and pleasant environment. You may increase your operational costs a bit executing this superior atmosphere and service level, but you will be rewarded by an increase in customer loyalty – and by extensions sales.

2. Avoid Routine

It is important that returning customers do not feel that every time they enter your buying environment they have the identical experience. The level of the experience in terms of quality and attentiveness needs to remain the same, but the physical environment can offer some refreshing changes – communicating to the customer that you are not taking them for granted, but rather making changes (moving forward) for their benefit and pleasure. You do not want to give the impression that you are on auto-pilot or disengaged from their opinions, but rather that you are constantly seeking ways to improve the service and atmosphere you deliver.

3. Pay Attention

Paying attention to your customers should be a no-brainer and yet so many companies by-pass the customer. Efficiency driven companies have installed voice mail and have cut down on their service departments. These may save money, but they also alienate customers and erode customer loyalty. The response given by many companies that the negative affects of their efficiency measures are neutralized by similar measures taken by competitors is short sighted. The company that brings back paying attention to their customers will present a compelling case to the market and draw loyalty away from others.

4. Listen

Winning customers over can be as easy as listening. Consumers are not shy and are more than happy to let us know what we have to do to win over and keep their business. The mechanisms for listening have been developed and are constantly activated (such as surveys) and yet when the results come in it is not uncommon for management to ignore the opinions expressed because of the costs associated with listening. The idea that we ask consumers what they want while we have no true intention of implementing their request is not lost on consumers. They express their displeasure by transforming their buying habits and reducing the extent to which they display allegiance. If companies seeking to embrace their customers listen to the requests coming from the market they will find that their responsiveness is rewarded with customer loyalty.

5. Be Flexible

Nothing reduces customer satisfaction more than a rigid set of rules that are unable to respond to the quirks of the customer's particular situation. The creation of rules is necessary to allow for the systematic operations of the company. While this is granted and understood, the customer cannot be the casualty of the company's quest for efficiencies. The need remains for the company to have the capacity to be flexible enough to meet the specific needs of the consumer and respond to extraordinary circumstances in a satisfying (to the consumer) manner.

6. Leave a Lasting Impression

Those last few moments you interact with your customer are the most important of their entire buying experience. It is essential that you make a special effort to demonstrate during these last few moments your dedication to service and their satisfaction. The combination of friendliness, concern, and attentiveness will go a long way in winning over the customer, and coming at those last few minutes you will be sure that the pleasant exchange will be the last thing they remember.

Winning over customers is not as difficult as companies contend. It merely requires a willingness to engage in the activities and commit the resources (as in money) necessary to make customers feel appreciated and accommodated. Companies that take pride in their mission and seek to compete with dignity should find it easy to win over customers. All they have to do is treat the customer like the engine that drives their business.