

25 Ways to Keep Your Customers for Life

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In today's fast-changing and competitive environment, excellent customer service is not only nice but essential for success. In fact, the only way to differentiate yourself and to become less of a commodity in the marketplace is through outstanding customer service. The strategies for keeping customers for life can be honed down to some basic steps that any business owner can use. To get customers, keep them and to get enthusiastic referrals follow these 25 proven techniques:

1. Reward your customers. Send them a gift, provide them a lead, generate business for them, etc.
2. Use your customers' services and buy their products. If you want to increase loyalty, there is no better way.
3. Send thank-you cards. Make sure they are handwritten and sent promptly. Peter Drucker attributed much of his success to the fact that he sent out 12 thank-you cards every day.
4. Return phone calls promptly. Since so many people don't return calls, you automatically look good when you do.
5. Do what you say you are going to do.
6. Do things when you say you're going to do them.
7. Under promise and over deliver.
8. Be accessible. Make sure you are available and willing to help customers whenever there is a problem. Your business should be open to meet the convenience of your customers and not only for your convenience.
9. Be credible. If you can't establish that trust right away, customers may start to look at your competitors.
10. Appearance counts. Perception is reality, and the reality is that people do judge a book by its cover.
11. Show empathy. Remember the best customers are your current ones. Stay in touch and continue to service their wants and needs.
12. Have a "Goof Kit." If you make a mistake, it's not enough to say, "I'm sorry."
13. Promote customers' products and services. By getting business for your clients, you ensure you will have a customer for life.
14. Do things for the customer's convenience not yours. Make it as easy as possible for your customers to do business with you. The easier you can make it for your customer to do business with you, the more business you will have. Determine all the ways you can eliminate the hassle factor.
15. Send an invoice periodically with a "no charge" on it. This will help your customers remember you. And if it is unexpected, it will have a much larger impact.

16. Have a customer advisory panel. Only by knowing your customers' wants and needs can you successfully grow your business and be totally customer-oriented.
17. Hire mystery shoppers. To really find out how good your customer service is, hire someone to go out and use your service from start to finish.
18. Be a resource. No matter what your customer needs, try to find it for them -- even if it has nothing to do with your business.
19. Shower customers with kindness.
20. Speak your customers' language. If you use jargon your customers can't understand, they won't use you.
21. Have a great attitude.
22. Treat your employees well. If they are treated poorly, there is a good chance your customers will also get poor service.
23. Give your customer what they want, when they want it and how they want it.
24. Give back to your best customers. If you run a special price or product offer for first-time customers, ensure your current customers are offered the same opportunity.
25. Don't show an attitude of indifference to your customers. In a recent study on why people give up on a company, 68 percent quit because of an attitude of indifference toward the customers by the owner, manager or employees - 68 percent!

Conclusion

"Customer service is more than just smile training -- it's about treating people the way they wanted to be treated," "It's also about giving the client what they want, when they want it and how they want it. It really comes down to the fact that good communication and human relations skills equals good customer relations."



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