

Singapore Marketer - Customer Loyalty Article

By Carol Wain

What is customer loyalty? Does it even exist -- after all customers can be loyal to your business because of convenience only, yet given a change in their lives -- whether a new job or a new home, their loyalty vanishes. Customers can also be satisfied while doing business with you yet they aren't loyal.

Do you do business with multiple companies that are competing for your hard-earned money? I suspect you do, as do many of us -- you may buy a book from your local book-store or department store, yet you also likely buy books online too.

So, how does one attract the right customer, convince them to buy, return, buy more and refer their friends and family? The answer is simple to state in theory yet so many businesses find it difficult to implement because the answer is like a puzzle that requires all the pieces to achieve ultimate success.

Defining Your Ideal Customer

The first step is one that many of us fail to do. We fail to identify our ideal customers -- those people we want to serve and who are also highly profitable while being easy to serve. Ideal customers appreciate what you offer to them and they make your lives easy compared to difficult or fickle customers. They do not demand more than your product or service provides.

Effective marketing does not include throwing a "fishing net" out into the marketplace in an attempt to catch as many fish as possible. Some fish will be great customers, some awful customers and the majority will be the type of customer that could go either way.

Instead we need to be very specific in who we want to attract as an ideal customer -- we need a fishing rod with just the right bait. For example, my business consists of coaching, training and consulting services with optional done-for-you services. Although there are various divisions and a variety of products within each division, we have clearly identified who our ideal customer is for each. We have an online training product called FORCE, which targets successful entrepreneurs, with an appreciation for the value of collaboration, and who are ready to take their business to the next level. We also have a 30-Day Reinvention Challenge that we market to mid-life, successful, business women who are ready to put themselves first and live the life they were meant.

You need to get very specific with your own ideal customer, so that you know them "inside - out". Know their fears, worries, problems and exactly what they are looking for in terms of a solution. When you speak to them in the words they use, solving problems that they have, you will not only attract more ideal customers but you'll repel the customers you don't want, which makes it easier to service your ideal customers in a way they will appreciate.

Making the Sale -- again and again

When you have gone through the process of identifying your ideal customers and exactly how you can provide a valuable solution to their problems, the next step is to market to them. You already know which words to use to attract them. If you don't, listen to what your customers are saying when they speak to you and then use those terms in your marketing e.g. our customers have "burning desires"; they are "overwhelmed", "frustrated", "unsatisfied", "over worked", "unappreciated"; they need "more profit", "more customers", "better employees" etc..

4 ways to increase your sales:

1. Cross-selling, which sells a complementary product at the time of sale or shortly thereafter;
2. Up-selling, which suggests / recommends a product or service which has a higher investment / cost yet provides more of what they need;
3. Selling more frequently to the same customer using various promotions; and
4. Adding more customers -- preferably as a result of referrals from existing customers.

After you have attracted then convinced your customers to serve them (providing the solution they seek), the next steps are to offer an up-sell or a cross-sell at the time of the purchase. Why? Two reasons: they are already in the buying mode; and you are doing them a favour which saves them frustration and time. For example, if you are selling battery-operated toys, ask if they need the batteries (cross-sell). If you are selling a consulting package, suggest the next higher tier package if it makes sense (up-sell) or if it doesn't make sense, suggest a complementary product or service that will make their lives even easier.

Selling more frequently to the same customer occurs when you establish a relationship with them where they will permit you to send relevant offers which they then act upon -- even if they had no intention of purchasing at the time they received the offer. Depending on your customers, you may call them, communicate through social networking channels, send them mobile messages or send them offers via direct mail.

Finally, ask for referrals -- it is so easy to do and yet so many people are either fearful of asking or don't know how valuable referrals are. There are two great times to ask for the referral -- immediately after you have made the sale and when you follow-up to ensure they are happy with their purchase.

Consider offering a "bring a friend" event which not only results in a purchase the original customer may not have made but it will also result in a referral -- also remember to upsell and/or cross-sell. Creativity is the key!

Customer Experience

The absolute best way to retain your customers is to ensure their experience is exceptional -- that your brand promise is delivered; your product exceeds expectations; your employees deliver consistent service and you are easy to do business with. Invest time and energy into being your own "detective" by shopping incognito. Test your systems, your website, your call center, your employees and be sure that

you are doing everything possible to retain your ideal customers. You'll be far more successful in engaging your customers than businesses that don't.

Carol Wain is the Queen of Reinvention – a mentor, consultant, trainer, speaker, coach, best-selling author and Entrepreneur of the Year 2003. Her passion lies in STAR Reinventions (Sustainable, Transformational, Attractive and Resourceful). In her latest reinvention, Carol realized that her life's apprenticeship, both personally and professionally, is her calling and that she has been chosen to transform lives globally.

Carol hosts TheReinventionShow.com and is the creative force and producer behind various Reinvention Summits. She wrote the best-selling book Guerrilla Tourism Marketing and Leverage Your Relationships, Expertise and Resources and she is currently writing a variety of books about reinvention.

Visit <http://CarolWain.com> for more information.