

## Report Number 23454

### Customer Service:

## How to Get First Time Customers to Come Back

The following article was written by Tom Egelhoff

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### Say Thank You

Isn't this common sense? It's amazing in this day and age that something so simple and so effective would even have to be mentioned. A first time buyer is a first time buyer only once. You never get a second chance to make a good first impression. You are trying to build customer loyalty. Make sure each customer receives a sincere and honest, "Thank You."

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### Customer Feedback

Make it easy for customers to complain. There's nothing worse than a first time customer who's unhappy with your product or service. Follow up with a new customer is critical. If a problem arises correct it immediately.

I'm reminded of the customer who wanted to return a set of automobile tires she thought she had purchased from Nordstrom's. The giant clothing chain has never sold tires and probably never will. But they are known worldwide for their customer service. In this case they graciously refunded the woman's money in full and (see #1) thanked her for shopping at Nordstrom's. The story appeared on the front page of the Wall Street Journal. What's That Worth??

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### Customer Relationship

If you sell a product that requires some training or indoctrination, you need to form an immediate relationship with your customer. If your customer has problems operating their new computer, or software or whatever, the easiest person to blame is you.

In a small town where everybody knows everybody, comments on poor service or poor training will spread quickly. Make sure you take the extra time to confirm that the product is working

properly or the service being performed is understood completely.

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### **Reinforce the Value**

Good service isn't always enough. Do you remember a McDonald's where the service you received was head and shoulders above all other McDonalds? You left a major tip and called out the manager to personally thank him or her...right?

My wife and I can still remember the best service we ever received in a restaurant. It was Christmas Day, 1984 and our first time dining at this particular restaurant. We often relate the story of our fabulous waiter when we dine with friends. He took our complete order and never wrote anything down. He took orders for a table of eight and never wrote anything down. He was there with the water refills at exactly the right time. Cleared the table at the right time. Brought coffee at the right time. He was the best waiter I've ever seen in 40 years of dining out all over the world.

He reinforced his value to us in everything he did. His customer service set a standard for all other waiters to emulate.

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### **Develop a Strong Customer Database**

Do you know what your customers are buying? Maybe more importantly, do you know what they are not buying? A database is extremely useful in knowing your customers. Ever receive a mailing with your credit card bill? Do you think each person who receives a bill gets the same advertising? Does the person with a \$500 credit limit get the same product advertising as the person with a \$5000 limit? Not on your life. Chances are you know your best customers and what they buy, but what about the other customers? What do they want? Find out and you'll make a lot of money.

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### **Tell the whole story**

Do your customers know all the things you do? Many companies add products and services and the last people to know are the customers. Make sure that your customers have the whole story on your products and services. Mail news announcements as

soon as new products or services are available. Your first time customer probably came in for something from an ad. Make sure they know about your other services for later.

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### **Invest in your customers**

Every once in a while you have to go the "extra mile" for a customer. Extra expense may be incurred. I ordered some labels from a company and the order was misplaced. We had to have the labels by a specific date. The labels arrived on time as promised with an enclosed form that read:

**PROMISED ORDER:** This job is promised and must be shipped on time under any circumstance. Every employee having anything to do with this order will be held strictly responsible for seeing that no expense must be spared to see that this order is delivered **ON TIME.**

This form was signed by 30 employees, documenting the date and time they each received their part of the job and who they passed it on to.

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### **Reward the customer**

Keep that first time customer coming back with special sales. Mail a postcard for a special unadvertised sale to all your first time customers each month. Have the sale during hours you are normally closed. Make the first time customers feel important.

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### **Welcome promotions**

Create a "New Customer Welcome" kit. Include brochures, announcements of new products or services, referral cards and maybe some coupons on some of those products and services.

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### **Some final thoughts**

I used to teach customer service classes but I don't any longer. Why? Because the business owners would send their employees to the class when the persons who belonged there were the owners themselves.

Customer service is very hard to define. We all know it when we see it, but what is it. I believe it is how each of your employees feels about themselves. How they treat customers will be in direct proportion to how they are treated by management. The more employees are respected and appreciated by management, the more pride they will take in their work. And they will pass that on to the customer.

I am not a big fan of "Employee of the Month" awards. Think about it. If you have 25 employees, you have one winner and 24 losers.

I would much rather see each employee singled out and recognized for some good job sometime during the month. No matter how small the task or assignment. That way each person has an incentive to grow and excel in their own areas of responsibility. Employees should compete against they're own best record, not other employees. They should strive to constantly improve their personal best.

Remember the definition of success: Success is the progressive realization of a worth while goal or dream. Work toward your dream.