



DESIGNING STRATEGIES

Business Strategies for the Design Industry

A Maurer Consulting Group Publication

Volume 5 • Issue 23 •

July/August 2008

Do you assume that because some of your customers come back to you that they trust you and can be considered loyal customers? Do they trust you to do what is in their best interests and meet their needs? Are you *sure*? My husband recently returned from a week of training at the Disney Institute in Orlando. Prior to their arrival, the folks at Disney did a pre-event survey of this Fortune 500 company's customers. Let's just say that everyone in the training session was surprised...no, shocked, is a better term... to learn that some of their best customers stated that if there were another option available to them, they would leave.

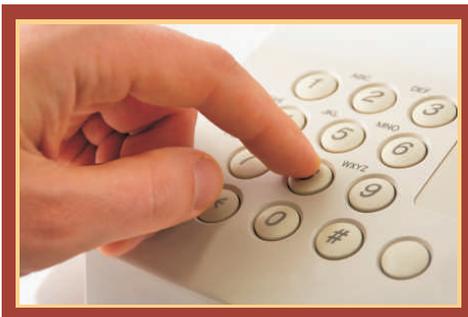
Visualize



WOW! Talk about your eye-opening experience. What do you think your response would be if you were asked this question about your customers? Would you be confident that you are serving them at a level that would keep them coming back time after time to purchase your products and services? Or, would you be just as surprised to hear that all it would take for your best customers to jump ship would be an alternative source?

Like it or not, today's markets are controlled by consumers. They are the ones in the driver's seat. Access to global suppliers through the Internet has given them a much larger choice of manufacturers and distributors to choose from, not to mention an unending supply of products they might never have known about five to ten years ago. Have you talked to your customers lately...picked up the phone and called to ask how satisfied they are with your company, your products and your customer service? Have you contracted to do a survey of your important customers? If not, why not?

Analyze



Today, more than ever before, it is imperative to stay in close contact with your customers. With so many viable options for them to choose from, you could lose a long standing client and account over what may seem trivial to you, but important to them. It can be as little as not promptly responding to a phone call or e-mail, or taking too long to solve a quality control issue, and *poof*, that once loyal customer has moved on, taking his money to another supplier.

How do you intend to address this potential problem? Hopefully, not sitting back, waiting to hear about it after a valued customer has taken their business elsewhere. You need to be proactive and develop a plan for engaging your customers, both large and small. Set aside time to make calls to your most valued customers. Ask how they view your products and services, what their level of satisfaction is, and how you can do a better job of serving them. Take a survey of smaller customers to gauge their satisfaction and your ability to grow your business with them. **NOW** is the time to plan for moving your organization to a much higher level of customer satisfaction. **Remember: it is much less expensive and easier to keep a good customer than go out and get a new one.**

Strategize



Continuing Ed Ops!

If you're looking for a way to bring customers into your showroom, or help a distributor attract new customers, I would be very interested in presenting one of my continuing education programs.

Business topics range from personal branding, starting and growing a business, to charging fees based on value. Other popular topics focus on generational diversity: designing for the generations, marketing and selling to the generations, and recruiting and retaining an age-diverse workforce.

For a complete list of programs or for more information, please contact me directly at 330.666.0802 or tlmaurer@maurerconsultinggroup.com.

Please remember to email me your questions. If space permits, they will be answered in future issues of **Designing Strategies**.

There are costs and risks to a program of action, but they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction.

John F. Kennedy