

How Loyal Are Your Customers?



Do you assume that because some of your customers come back to you that they trust you and can be considered loyal customers? WOW! Talk about your eye-opening experience. That may have been true in the past, but not necessarily in today's marketplace. Today, more than ever before, it is imperative to stay in close contact with your customers. It is pretty common knowledge that it is much less expensive and easier to keep a good customer than go out and get a new one.

Do Your Customers Trust You?

Do customers trust you to do what is in their best interest and meets their needs? Are you *sure*? A colleague 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 customers of this Fortune 500 company. They were presented with results from a brief survey about the relationship between the company and its customers. Let's just say that everyone in the training session was surprised. No, shocked, is a much better term for their emotional response to learning that some of their best customers stated that if there were another option available to them, they would leave.

What do you think the response would be if your customers were asked this question about you, your company and staff? Are you 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 some unnamed alternative source?

Customers Are in Control!

Like it or not, today's markets are controlled by consumers. Customers 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. That said, they also have access to an expanded source of products and services 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?

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.

Improve Your Customer Loyalty.

How do you intend to address the potential of your long time customers going elsewhere?

Hopefully, you won't be sitting back, waiting to hear about it after the fact, when a valued customer has taken their business to a competitor for no apparent reason. It is imperative to be proactive and develop a plan for engaging your customers, both large and small. Customers deal with people they know, like and trust. How do you rate at those three criteria? We're operating in a relationship marketplace today where brand loyalty is no longer at the top of shoppers' lists.

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. Plan events where you can get to know your customers and their needs better. It can be as little as sending them your newsletter or a hand-written note or birthday card. Or, just meet them for coffee and some conversation. Hosting a special speaker or offering in your store or showroom will let you invite a group of customers in where you can introduce a new service or product line they might be interested in.

Competitors now market to customers 24/7/365 through web sites on the Internet. Small businesses need to exert more effort to get and keep a customer's attention. Do something unique and different – something no one else is doing. Cater to your local customers in ways far away competitors can't. Make them realize that low price isn't everything. It's all about relationships.

Now is the time to plan for moving your organization to a much higher level of customer satisfaction.

Maurer Consulting Group is a strategies firm helping clients evaluate and formulate strategies for success. For a conversation with Terri L Maurer about your firm and how we can get you focused on growth and success, call **330.666.0802** or send an email to Terri at: tmaurer@maurerconsultinggroup.com.