BUSINESS IS BUILT ON RELATIONSHIPS - MAKE BUILDING THEM YOUR BUSINESS

One of the very first basic things we learn in business is that without customers, there can be no business. It can often be as challenging to ensure a business keeps customers as it is to gain new customers. As we move toward the holiday season, where the fight to gain and keep customers intensifies in a highly competitive world, we thought the following tips in “making your customers fall in love with you” would hopefully spark some ideas for you in your business.

Best Regards,

KEITH KNUDSEN
PRESIDENT/CEO
SECURITY BANK

HOW TO MAKE CUSTOMERS FALL IN LOVE WITH YOU— AND STAY THAT WAY

by Ivana Taylor | www.questionpro.com

I was being laughed at. In a large corporate conference room, twenty executives from the manufacturing company I worked for were literally laughing out loud. “You want us to love our customer?! What? Like ‘get in bed’ with our customer?!! Ha ha ha! That is ridiculous!”

Yes. I want you to love your customer. Like you love your golf, your car, your best friend, wife, and your favorite team. If you are laughing like they were, then go ahead. Take a moment and laugh. But then I urge you to come back and keep reading because the companies who truly love their customers are laughing all the way to the bank.

PURCHASING IS AN EMOTIONAL DECISION
You might be a CEO or marketing executive when you go to work, but you don’t leave your humanity at the door. You take it with you everywhere you go. And so does your customer. It’s common knowledge that we buy from people we know, like and trust and not just from companies who have the product and service we are looking for at the lowest price. Purchasing is fundamentally an emotional process.

We have an emotional relationship with our money, and we don’t like to see it go to waste. This is inherently the driver behind how we perceive value. Products and services have value when we feel like we paid less than the benefit we received.

The challenge for companies is to make the shift from perceiving that value comes from the actual product or service to knowing that the value is a byproduct of how the customer ultimately experiences their interaction with the company and its offer.

WE STAY FOR PLEASURE AND RUN FROM PAIN

Human beings are simple creatures. Our brains are wired to keep us safe. This is why we don’t like change (even if it’s good for us). Another way to think about it is that human beings are “safety seeking devices”. If it feels good, makes us look good, keeps us safe and happy – we’re going to choose it at any cost.

Ultimately, these core human needs are the key drivers of customer loyalty. For the sake of this article, I’m going to define loyalty simple as repeat purchasing behavior. I’m also going to make the assumption that our desired repeat purchase behavior is driven by specific triggers. In other words, when my customer experiences “x”, I want them to buy “y” – every time, regardless of price.
Let's take a look at some successful brands who have achieved this kind of loyalty:

**FEDERAL EXPRESS:** When my customer experiences the pressure to have a package delivered overnight, I want them to ship with me.

**DOMINO'S PIZZA:** When my customer has to have dinner in 30 minutes or less, I want them to call me.

**GOOGLE:** When my customer has to find something on the internet, I want them to search with my tool.

**APPLE:** When my customer wants a simple, intuitive device that looks beautiful, I want them to use my computers. Another one is – when my customer wants to look “hip” I want them to choose Apple.

7 CORE NEEDS YOU MUST ADDRESS TO ACHIEVE LOYALTY

Small business owners often tell me that they are concerned about competition from China or even from local competitors who are offering cheaper products. Their customers are either leaving them for cheaper alternatives, or they are complaining about price and threatening to leave.

When your customers are complaining about price – they don’t know why they should choose you. Remember, it’s not about just the product or the service, it’s about how well your product or service delivers on their core needs. And this is true for consumer products as well as for industrial business-to-business products.

To create insanely loyal customers, you must have a marketing process and message that consistently touches on your customers’ core human needs.

1. **SAFETY:** Every human being needs to feel safe and free from danger. Granted, we are not being chased by dinosaurs, but our brains are still wired to keep us safe. Safety can mean anything from feeling safe in our home (if you’re selling an alarm system) or feeling safe in our job (IBM’s famous campaign “No one got fired by choosing IBM”). Take a close look at your product or service and brainstorm all the ways that it provides safety. Don’t just be literal, even a loose connection will work.

2. **SHELTER:** In what ways will your product or service help them gain shelter (home) or beautify their home, enjoy their home, etc. Think about products like windows. Windows can be beautiful, they can also provide protection from damaging rays of the sun.

3. **PROTECTION FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY:** While safety is protection of self, human beings are also deeply wired to protect the ones they love. Look at your product or service and list all the ways in which it will help your customer protect the ones they love. It can be obvious as in the sale of a security system or it can be a more loose and intuitive connection such as being able to provide for friends and family financially. Even something as mundane as a floor cleaner can be described as protecting your children from germs.

4. **LOOKING GOOD AND BEING ACCEPTED:** Every human being wants to look good and be accepted by their community. This is why customer service is important. This is why we often say the customer is always right. Make a list of all the ways that your product or service helps your customer achieve a greater social status. Maybe your product helps them save money and feel like they got a good deal, maybe your service is so fast, that they will have achieved results faster then their neighbor.

5. **RELATIONSHIP:** Human beings crave relationship. Think about all the different ways that your product or service helps them build relationships and improve relationships with themselves and others.

6. **HEALTH AND WELLNESS:** The core need here is really food and beverage. In many countries around the world, people are either overweight or they are stressed and overwhelmed. Brainstorm all the ways that your product or service contributes to their core needs for wellness.

7. **ENJOYMENT OF LIFE:** Everyone wants their life to be easy and effortless. Deep down inside, your customer wants to understand how your product or service will make their life easy. Will they have more time to spend with friends and family? Will they achieve the same results by spending less money? Will they achieve their goals faster?

It’s very important that your product or service has a response to every single one of these core needs. Remember you are talking to large groups of people and different things are important to each of them. Of course, depending on your product or service, some core needs will be a more obvious connection than others, but your marketing message must contain some element of each one.

LOYALTY STARTS WITH THE BASICS

Whenever small business owners and CEOs ask me about loyalty, they think that I’m going to jump right into strategies, tactics and programs. But the truth of the matter is that every marketing strategy has to begin on a solid foundation, grounded in what matters most to customers.

The seven core elements that I’ve covered here are the most basic of human needs. Begin your process with simple brainstorming. Then, you can move on to qualitative research such as using focus groups so that you can actually test your assumptions. Finally, if you want to take it to a higher quantitative level, you can start doing research to measure which of these core needs are the most powerful trigger with your target market.

Regardless of where you begin your discovery of your customers’ core needs. You will find that even the smaller changes that you make in your business will bring them closer to you. They will feel like they know you and like you know them. They will have a connection to you and like you and as a result, they will buy from you every time, regardless of price.