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Delivering on your promises is the very foundation of customer loyalty.

Increase Customer Loyalty

Customers who feel valued want to be your advocates.

by Dr. Noelle C. Nelson

No matter how your customer comes to buy your product initially, it's what happens after the sale that's important. Studies show that your customers' level of willingness to come back and buy from you again, to tell their friends and family to buy from you and thus to become a loyal customer is what determines your true profit.

Customer loyalty is predicated on something that goes way beyond mere satisfaction. Your customers' willingness to become loyal, to become advocates for your product or service depends on the quality of the experience you afford them. That experience encompasses the purchasing process (including delivery), the product (performance, ease of function, durability) and how customer concerns are handled.

The Appreciation Factor

Customers who feel appreciated in every aspect of their experience with your company respond with appreciation in return. Their expectations of getting fair value for their dollar are now synchronized with your expectations of giving them that value. What matters to customers isn't the amount of dollars spent, per se, it's the synchronization of fair value. The experience Starbucks aficionados receive at their local Starbucks, for example, matches their expectations. The fact that they are paying three to four times what they would pay for a similar cup of coffee elsewhere is warranted by that experience.

Valuing the customer starts with delivering on your promises: If you say something will be there overnight, it had better be there overnight. Whatever you claim your product or service will do for the customer, it must do. As a result, the customers' needs have been respected, therefore they feel valued.

Delivering on your promises is the very foundation of customer loyalty. You can have a spectacular restaurant setting and fantastic waiters but if the food isn't good, you won't develop loyal customers. Quality control is critical to customer loyalty. Your obsession with value must pervade all levels of production or service.

Getting to Know You

Customer loyalty is an intensely individual matter. Every customer, be they a corporation or a homeowner, wants to feel that their individual needs are addressed. It really doesn't matter to Customer Smith if Customer Jones is happy. Customer Smith will become a loyal customer only if he feels his needs are important to the company and his needs are specifically valued.

Think of every interaction with a customer as yet another opportunity to bring them into the fold of those who value and appreciate your product.

For that to occur, employees who interface with the public must already be convinced of the excellence of your product or service, the benefit to those who will buy it, and the joy of sharing that excellence with customers. Bringing customers into the fold is easy for employees steeped in the value of your product or service.

Follow The Appreciation Cycle

An appreciative cycle leads to success and profits. It starts at the top. The owner of the company sees the value of the product or service and conveys this appreciation to employees. Employees, in turn, become passionate about the product or service themselves. Employees then convey that appreciation to those who wish to buy the product or service. Customers become loyal customers, returning to buy more and extolling the brand to friends and family. The appreciation cycle is truly a win-win process.