

# 10 Ways to Improve Customer Loyalty

by Lori Greenwell,  
Manager of Marketing Communications for American Business Advisors, Inc.

Customer satisfaction is not enough to ensure repeat business. Satisfied customers jump ship every day, and the reasons are not always what you might think. According to Michael LeBoeuf, Ph.D., author of *How to Win Customers and Keep them for Life*, 68% of customers are lost due to indifference. Indifferent customers are a result of pure neglect.

Customer acquisition cost, the dollar value required to gain new business, is high. It is six to ten times higher for new customers than for repeat business. How can you increase customer retention?

Changing customer neglect into customer satisfaction, then customer satisfaction into customer loyalty, is critical. Loyal customers are the best marketing in town. It doesn't happen by magic, but it isn't as difficult as it may seem. Improving customer loyalty will shine as a marketing tool, while at the same time improve delivery of your service or products.

This list of ten items will help you focus on your customers. If you are like most companies, you already practice some of these things some of the time. The idea is to keep reminding yourself and every member of your company how important it is to do these things all of the time. Whether your business is small or large, or sells products or services, these items can be adapted to your customers.

- 1. *Thank customers for doing business with you.*** In writing. The value of the product or service will determine what is appropriate. High cost service deals warrant a handwritten note; even smaller cost transaction companies can send pre-printed appreciation notes to customers on a scheduled basis.
- 2. *Stay in contact with existing and past clients on a consistent basis.*** By not forgetting them, they won't forget you. Phone calls, notecards or postcards, newsletters, and e-mail are only some ideas. Consider also opportunities for personal contact, a good idea in our high-tech, low-touch world.
- 3. *Give the customer more than they expect.*** Anticipate a need and fill it. Answer a question before they ask it. Delivering more than they expect is one of the most powerful ways to gain customer loyalty.
- 4. *Listen.*** Take time to truly listen to what your customers say, and if they don't volunteer information—ask for it.
- 5. *Pay attention to the obvious.*** Mind your manners. Use please and thank you. Be on time for meetings. Promptly return phone calls and e-mail messages.
- 6. *Make realistic promises***—and be consistent. It is far better to promise something in a week and deliver in three days than the other way around.

7. **Share information.** Send pertinent articles or information that may be valuable or simply interesting to a client. Always look for ways to help customers learn.
8. **Give referrals to clients.** Send business back to a client whenever possible, and let them know you are doing it.
9. **Explain how things work.** If you sell a product, show how to use it. If you sell a service, explain what the customer can do to maximize its value.
10. **Have fun!** Really enjoy your customers, develop relationships, look upon them as your extended family. On occasion, treat a customer to something fun to show your appreciation. Use your imagination!

Remember, a little goes a long way. Any effort you make to keep your customers happy is an improvement, and each extra effort will increase your customer loyalty. Make it a habit to conscientiously view your clients as the most important asset you have. After all, if you do not have customers, you do not have a business!

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