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Feature Article

Build Customer Loyalty by Promoting Your Customers

By Cathy Stucker

Do you want to attract new customers while building greater loyalty among your current customers? Include your customers in your marketing and promotions. By creating greater awareness of your customers (and their businesses) you may help to build their businesses and increase their demand for your products and services. Whether or not using customers in your marketing causes them to buy more from you, your willingness to showcase them will cause them to feel more attachment to you and will encourage them to remain customers for a long time to come.

Here are a few ways you can make this work for you.

- Ask your customers to share their success stories and get their permission to use them. How have they benefitted from their association with you? Have them share their stories on audio or video or in print and use them in your marketing. In their ads, Sterling Bank in Houston has their small business customers tell how they grew their businesses with the help of their Sterling bankers. It sends a great message about the bank, and increases awareness of the featured businesses.
- Tell your customers' stories in your newsletter. If you publish a print or online newsletter, include profiles of your customers and tell how you worked with them to help them succeed. Or, use the stories in your print ads. A photo of a happy customer accompanied by the story of what you did for them is very persuasive.
- Audio and video recordings of customer stories can be incorporated into your television and radio advertising. Hearing customers in their own words is a powerful way to communicate the benefits of doing business with you, and your customers will appreciate the visibility they get when they are featured in your ads.
- You can also use streaming audio and video files at your web site. Feature links to your customers' web sites from yours. It doesn't cost anything to add a few links, and customers will appreciate the extra visibility. It may also help improve the search engine rankings, not only for your customers' web sites, but for yours as well.
- Make connections between customers. Do you have customers who could benefit from knowing other customers? Perhaps you could make referrals to bring them together. Or, host a networking

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Marketing

How to Write Press
Releases That
Work
And Get Free
Publicity for Your
Business

The Power of
Asking People
What They Think -
AND then Really
Listening and
Hearing What They

event where they can get to know each other.

- Include customers in your publicity. The media like to have multiple sources for stories, perhaps to back up what you are saying or to provide another point of view. In one case, I was able to get a client included in a story and she was able to get one of her clients into the story, too! Your clients will not only appreciate that you got them publicity, they will be impressed with your media "pull."

Say.

Why Are You
Waiting to Ask For
Referrals?

Strategic Thinking
& Planning
Success Story

Promoting your customers as well as yourself is a great win-win for your business. Look for opportunities to create a greater bond between yourself and your customers by including them in your marketing and promotions.

and more...

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Promotion Help

Selling Tips - Dealing With Difficult Prospects

By: J. Glenn Ebersole, Jr., Chief Executive of J. G. Ebersole Associates and The Renaissance Group™

A couple years ago during Small Business Week I met Bill Brooks and learned about The Brooks Group. Bill is another one of those people who I "listen to" - and more importantly "HEAR" when he speaks. In the October IMPACT Sales Bulletin from The Brooks Group, Bill authored an article which discusses "difficult prospects" and the reasons they give you such a hard time. I found the article to be "right on target" and wanted you to have the benefit of this insightful article that follows below:

Why Is Your Prospect So Difficult? -by Bill Brooks

Have you ever encountered a prospect who seemed to question everything you say, do or suggest? If you have, you're not alone.

In my 25-year sales career, I have encountered the same types of problematic prospects that you have. I have concluded that there are eight basic reasons that prospects build these walls of resistance against sales professionals' products and services.

Here they are:

1. Lack of knowledge regarding your product or service. This may very well be the single reason that your prospect is so resistant to you. When a prospect does not understand the nature of your product or service, he or she is also unaware that a need for that product or service may exist. Lack of knowledge must be met with education. It is your duty to educate your prospect about your product or service.

2. A skeptical prospect is a difficult prospect. This prospect might be disbelieving about the value of your product or service or the things that you say about it. Perhaps the best way to convince such a skeptic is to prove your claims in order to overcome his or her disbelief.

3. The need to compare is another reason that your prospect is hesitant to make a positive decision with regard to your offer. The prospect who always feels the need to compare your product or service with that of your competitor should, of course, always be accommodated. An important thing for you to remember is never, under any circumstances, insult your

competitor to a prospect. This practice is unprofessional and will cause your prospect to question your honesty.

4. Ease of acquisition or difficulty of acquisition is another reason for success or failure. How easy is it to do business with you? Is it a chore or a pleasure? Is it something that makes the trip worth the destination or is it so burdensome that prospects would rather not deal with you?

5. Not having a complete story or not understanding what you, your product, or its related benefits and what it can do for the prospect is another issue. Remember, people will not act on incomplete information.

6. Poor presentation on your part can be another barrier between you and the prospect. If you fail to effectively present the value of your product or service, then your chances of completing the sale are significantly diminished. The only advice that is of any value here is to improve your presentation skills.

7. Inadequate product performance is a big reason why many prospects resist salespeople. A product or service that does not measure up to a prospect's expectations is worthless to any prospect. Prospects who have had bad experiences in the past with a product or service that is comparable to yours will also be difficult to sell to.

8. A similar barrier between you and your prospect is prejudice against you and/or your product or service. Any negative experience that a prospect has had in the past with a comparable product or service is sure to be remembered. Anything negative that your prospect has heard about you and/or your product is sure to negatively affect your chances of making the sale. In terms of the way that your prospect views you, if he or she has any prejudices about you as a salesperson, then you are sure to encounter resistance because of this prejudice.

Identifying the root cause of prospect resistance is the first step to overcoming this unfortunate barrier to the sale. When you are able to understand why a prospect is consistently resistant to you, your product or service, or both, then you are better able to work around these barriers.

While some prospects will never buy from you regardless of how hard you try to overcome these barriers, your ability to identify the reasons behind prospect resistance will surely give you a key advantage in your sales career.

Source: www.thebrooksgroup.com

Business Help

Why Small Business Fail

By: J. Glenn Ebersole, Jr., Chief Executive of J. G. Ebersole Associates and The Renaissance Group™

Michael Gerber, author of the mega-best sellers "The E-Myth" and "The E-Myth Revisited," is one of the people I admire and respect and who has had a significant impact on me and my businesses. Although I have listened many times to Gerber's audio tape about the E-Myth, I always come away learning more. In addition, I have read a booklet by Michael Gerber entitled: "Why Most Small Businesses Fail and What You Can Do About It."

In this booklet - Gerber lists the 10 reasons why most businesses fail - and how you can avoid them. So - here they are:

1. Lack of management systems
2. Lack of vision, purpose, or principles
3. Lack of financial planning and review
4. Overdependence on specific individuals in the business
5. Poor market segmentation and/or strategy
6. Failure to establish and/or communicate company goals
7. Competition or lack of market knowledge
8. Inadequate capitalization
9. Absence of a standard-quality program
10. Owners concentrating on the technical, rather than the strategic, work at hand.

After reading this list a couple times, it became apparent that "strategic planning and strategic thinking" are absolutely vital to avoiding these reasons for failure. And that is what J. G. Ebersole Associates and The Renaissance Group™ is about. If you would like to be better prepared to have a successful business and know how you can avoid these Ten Reasons for failure, please [contact me](#).

Business Help

Year End Planning to Prepare for 2005

"Strategic Planning - To Plan or Not to Plan - That is the Question"

By: J. Glenn Ebersole, Jr., Chief Executive of J. G. Ebersole Associates and The Renaissance Group™

Reflecting recently with very fond memories of my educational path in life, I thought of my commencement speech entitled: "To Be or Not To Be Involved - That is the Question." Well, this made me think that perhaps the end of 2004 is the right time to start thinking about a similar question - "To Plan or Not to Plan." You may have considered strategic planning in the past and seemed to always come up with some valid reasons for delaying the initiation of strategic planning. And you may be thinking as you read this that you have some valid reasons for delaying the initiation of strategic planning again. However, please permit me to share a note of caution about delaying your decision.

1. Very frequently businesses have discover things during the initial planning cycle that would have probably remained undiscovered in the absence of the planning process. It is always amazing what you can learn from employees when you simply "ask them" questions during the planning cycle.
2. In today's ever-changing world, business is not going to stop and wait for you. Windows of opportunity open and close frequently and quickly. Will you be prepared to "see and recognize" those opportunities? Or will they "pass you by because you did not see or recognize them."

3. Delay can become a habit. One common cause for delay is a perception that you and/or your team simply isn't ready for strategic planning -- and therefore if you delay until they are ready, you will achieve better planning. While I may admit that there could be sometimes when this may be true: e.g. the company is recruiting a new CEO, there is no company that will ever be fully ready. Also, "better" planning next year is seldom really "better" and there has been a year of lost opportunities.

Is my message being received? The time to act is now - please don't procrastinate any longer. The sooner you begin, the sooner the power of strategic thinking and strategic planning can benefit you and your company. If you want to learn about that real power, please [contact me](#).

Promotion Help Setting the Right Price

By Cathy Stucker

One of the ways people get to know you is by the identity you project. Your company name, the way you present yourself, your business card and brochure, where you work, and other ways you conduct your business create an image that gives your customers information about you.

Pricing is a part of your image, too. Many entrepreneurs make the mistake of underpricing. They believe that the only way to attract customers is to have the lowest possible price. But this attitude can damage your business.

First of all, when you underprice you won't be adequately compensated for your time. You must be able to make enough money to pay your bills and grow your business, or you won't be in business very long. Ironically, underpricing can actually result in getting fewer customers, not more.

Think about this from the customer's perspective. Let's say you are looking for someone to do a job for you. You contact five companies, and get prices of \$4000, \$2700, \$2500, \$2400, and \$1000. Which one would you select? Assuming that the quotes are all based on the same specifications, most people would immediately eliminate the \$4000 quote as being way out of line; however, they would also be suspicious of the \$1000 quote. Why is it so much less than the others? Do they use substandard materials? Are their workers less skilled? Will they do a poor job--if they do the job at all?

Price isn't the only factor people consider when making a purchase. You might choose the \$2700 quote because you decide the price is reasonable, and someone from the company called you back quickly. You get a good feeling from their responsiveness, and decide they may be worth a few dollars more than the lowest bidder.

Some markets are more price sensitive than others, and there is probably a price point you can't exceed for your product or service. But coming in far below the "going rate" can be just as harmful to your business as overpricing.

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Employment Help

"The Perfect Labor Storm"

By Ira S. Wolfe

<http://www.super-solutions.com>

The argument that aging workers especially the baby boomers will work longer and many will never retire is a fact. The issue not being addressed is who will pay for their health care. The 55-plus age groups use 15 to 20 times more health care services than younger people.

Fact #306:

The rate of unscheduled absenteeism has climbed to a five-year high of 2.4 percent. (Source: CCH Inc.)

Fact #307:

Late minute no-shows cost organizations an average of \$610 per employee. (Source: CCH Inc.)

Fact #308:

Only 38 percent of employee who fail to show up for work are due to personal illness. 62 percent are for other reasons including family issues (23 percent), personal needs (18 percent), stress (11 percent) and entitlement mentality (10 percent). (Source: CCH Inc.)

Fact #309:

Paying the price for low morale: Organizations reporting low employee moral have higher rates and costs of absenteeism. Rates are more than one-third higher among companies with poor/fair morale. (Source: CCH Inc.)

Fact #310:

Employers with poor/fair morale set aside 4.9 percent of their budgets to cover the costs of absent workers compared to just 4.0 percent for organizations with good/very good morale. (Source: CCH Inc.)

Do you know about "The Perfect Labor Storm?" If not, I suggest you learn as much as possible as soon as possible so you and your business will be prepared to keep ahead of the "Storm". My recommendation to you is to obtain and read "The Perfect Labor Storm Fact Book" by Ira S. Wolfe. AND - For some great advice related to managing, motivating & matching your employees for success, I recommend you read Dr. Ira Wolfe's weekly newsletter "The Total View." Ira's web site address is: www.super-solutions.com You will find out how to get his book and how to sign up for his newsletter by visiting the site.

Virus Or Not - Hoaxes and Warnings

Listed below are virus that were "coming out" this month and what the *real* outcome of the situation was. Use this information to find out if you need to update your protection or let it fly.

Virus Name	Out There Or Not Out There
A Virtual Card For You	Not Out There
Christmas.exe	Out There
Family Pictures	Not Out There
Klez	Out There

If you want to check out other hoaxes and warnings visit -

www.truthorfiction.com

Until Next Time, keep striving to reach your goals and vision!

Glenn Ebersole

"Your Strategic Thinking Coach"

*P.S. Best personal wishes for a happy holiday season and a
happy, healthy & prosperous 2005!*

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