

Progressions Inc.

Sales Training & Consulting



What Builds Customer Loyalty?

As I was waiting for my car to be serviced I was reminded how loyal I am to this particular dealership. In tougher economic times it will be those businesses whose service rises above expectations that will not only survive but thrive. Let's face it, most businesses offer the same sort of products and services and in the good old U.S.A. we have an abundance of selection and therefore competition. So what does build customer loyalty? We all have businesses that we simply would not go anywhere else based on either their service standards or the approach of select individuals. Consider the following and see if you can identify a business that fits in these categories for yourself that you also are very loyal to.

- **A warm welcome and greeting.** So many of my favorite Whatcom County businesses excel in this area. When you walk into a business and you are greeted with a genuine smile, a warm salutation and greeting it simply makes your day. If on the other side an individual barely looks up or is engaged in a conversation with another co-worker you feel ignored, disregarded and certainly unappreciated. My physical therapy office all greet me and call me by name. My car dealership service department assures me of a quick and efficient transaction. And the sales manager always makes his way across the lobby to see how I am doing and share a short exchange. These are the types of activities that build loyalty and do not cost a dime. I was recently interviewed by a national economist on how sales people can succeed during tough economic times. This is one of the simple but essential ways.
- **Build rapport.** Building rapport takes time and heart. This is where a business owner invests their time to get to know you as an individual, those things that are important in your life and expresses a genuine interest in you and your priorities. I think the best example of this is my hair dresser. She must have a file of 3 x 5 cards somewhere. I will not have seen her for 4 to 6 months and she will somehow remember dogs and children's names, special events that have happened in my life, and little details that truly make me feel valued. As a result I simply would not consider going elsewhere. This decision is not based on price, location or competition... only relationship.
- **Going the extra mile.** In this case the first example that comes to mind is my banker. Without question my banker, so far exceeds my expectations for service that he has built a steadfast loyalty. I recently needed a wire transfer and within a matter of 5 minutes I had received confirmation that contact had been made to the receiver and the wire was on its way. When it comes to dealing with your money this sort of extra effort really makes a difference. Competition is stiff and I am asked weekly to open accounts at varying



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financial institutions as this is the field I provide training for most often. Due to both the relationship and consistently exceeding my expectations. There is one I account I simply would not move. This banker will keep my business.

- **Recognition.** To be recognized feels good! When you are in a business or simply going through the typical aspects of your life, when someone gives you an acknowledgement and warm hello it means a lot.
- **Take your time.** Relationships take time! Think of it as an investment or equity. The longer you know someone and if you are treated with respect and sincerity “equity” evolves. I so often see representatives get into “transaction mode” and that is that robotic processing of one transaction to the next. Instead of transactional think transformational where one attempts to transform a transaction into a relationship. This is what loyalty is all about.
- **Personalizing service.** No two customers are the same so whenever possible personalize the service so that the customer feels as if they are in fact a VIP and not just the next person in line or a number. Espresso stands often excel here. What a wonderful feeling it is to drive up and have someone remember your standard order and say “Will you have your ‘X’ today Lynn?” This personalization also builds loyalty.
- **Satisfaction guaranteed.** Earlier in the article I spoke of how much competition there is in our business community and how we simply have to try a little harder. With funds being a little tighter a service guarantee becomes more and more important. When we have an expenditure we want to know that we will in fact be satisfied with that purchase. I always marvel at how well the restaurant industry does this. If for any reason your order is not as expected the better restaurants are always prompt in providing you another order and many times offer a discount certificate or free dessert. When you delight the customer in this fashion you not only turn what could be seen as a negative into a positive but build customer loyalty.
- **Saying in touch.** Last but not least building customer loyalty means staying in touch with your customers. Think of ways that you can be the first business that your customer thinks of in a given category. Notes, articles of interest, newsletters or a simple phone call to say “Hello I haven’t seen you in a while” are all very inexpensive ways of staying in touch with your customers. You will earn customer loyalty if you proactively stay in touch with your customers. Think of ways that you can do just that.



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