



Repeat Business Challenge – The Five Point Plan

In the rush to get new business, this can be forgotten – but nurturing your existing customers is something that's vital, especially when money and business becomes harder to come by.

“Repeat customers are the heart of a successful business. Finding new clients and building a relationship with them is necessary but takes time and energy. With an existing client there's already a common ground and understanding of how each other works.”

There's no magic formula for winning repeat business, but there are some simple things you can do to keep your customers closer to you.

Get to know them better

If you know the right things about your customers, you have a better chance of continually meeting and exceeding their expectations – something which goes a long way towards winning repeat business. It's easy to become lost in a sea of information about customers, so it is important that you concentrate on knowing more of the things that will help you serve them better, rather than just knowing everything. What these are depends on what kind of business you're in, so for example you'll need to know different things if you're selling to businesses than consumers.

But typically, what you need to consider is what needs your product is filling for your customer. This may not always be the same thing as you originally created the product for – sometimes customers can use your products in surprising ways! Technology can help with getting to know your customers better. Customer response management (CRM) tools can help you identify leads more quickly and work out who your most profitable leads are. Time is well spent detailing where you are in the customer lifecycle with your products and services, so that resource can be applied effectively to the most attractive opportunities.

Keep your promises

It sounds obvious, but it's often forgotten. If you promise to do something for a client or customer, make sure that it gets done. If you aren't certain that you can deliver something on a given date, don't promise it. Customers have long memories for failing to deliver on promises, and the worst thing that can happen is that they believe you deliberately lied to them in order to get a sale.

Reward customers for their loyalty

If someone is a regular customer, offer them a discount. Whatever order management systems you use should be able to flag regular customers, maybe allowing you to offer them incremental bonus discounts. This can either be handled manually, if you have a personal relationship with the customer, or automatically, if your order system is automated.

But one thing to avoid is making the discounts start off too early, and get too steep. Discounting should be carefully selected – although the aim is to make the customer feel valuable, there is a limit to who you should extend this to and why. And never forget that you need to make a profit so handle “loss leading” offers very carefully.



Work on customer interaction

Most small companies know that it's important to present a good public face. But interacting with your customers isn't just about how someone answers the phone – it begins at a much deeper level than that. Try and avoid using language internally that you wouldn't use with customers, for example by lapsing into "business speak". If you're avoiding this internally, then you're likely to start talking to your customers like this too – and just end up boring or baffling them.

Train everyone in the company on how to present your products or services to customers. This isn't just to ensure that, if an opportunity comes along, they're prepared – it encourages everyone to think of the customer and their needs first.

Use testimonials wisely

Testimonials from your best customers are powerful tools for winning repeat business. If one customer says they would buy from you again, it acts as a strong encouragement for others to do so – although a good testimonial won't impress someone who's had a bad experience with your company, it might sway someone who is less than sure about what they want to do.

However, use testimonials wisely. If you keep publicising the same testimonial and using it over and over again, people will see through it. You need to constantly develop, revisit and refresh testimonials, keeping them up to date with the state of your business and where possible referring to new developments or services that have been installed or delivered successfully.

Key Points - Summary

- Keep your promises
- Reward loyalty
- Get to know your customers better
- Work on Customer Interaction
- Use testimonials wisely