



ADVANCE

practical ideas for changing times

July 2010 ■ Volume 6, Issue 7

Relationships and resourcefulness: Lead customers to your door. The Carlon Group

We've all heard, and likely experienced, the effects of the current recession. However, the encouraging reality is that customers are still buying products and services. So, how do you draw those customers to your business? The key is to be prepared, and work harder, smarter, and more creatively than your competition. Your customers are the source of your income, profits and success. They can also be the source of your company's demise. The better you serve them, the stronger your income, profits, and success. The two primary ways to better serve your customers are to develop strong, positive relationships with them, and to be a resource to them at all times.

Successful sales professionals know the key to gaining and retaining business is to create an incredible experience for every customer.

Communicating regularly with your customers is an important step in creating and strengthening relationships, and keeps you on their radar. A systematic, strategic

approach to communication will ensure a regular flow of information to create ongoing dialogue with current and potential clients.

One way to keep in touch with your customers is to send a monthly e-mail or paper newsletter. The newsletter should contain new product information, customer testimonials and any special offers or related sales promotions from your company. You should also plan phone communication and in-person communication, such as coffee, lunch, a golf day, or sporting event, for example, with your top prospects. Be certain not to communicate too often or not often enough with your prospects. You should define the communication parameters during the development of your strategic communication plan.

Another way to foster regular communication with your current and prospective clients is to hold events such as open houses or seminars at your business, and invite your contacts to attend. Invite them via a written notification, such as

Story continues on next page..

At Comcast, we want to demonstrate our commitment to helping your business succeed. ADVANCE is a monthly newsletter designed to provide you with practical ideas and strategies to help advance



your business during these changing times. We hope you find this useful.

Tailor your approach

Plan the frequency and type of communication you use to reach each customer and prospect. For example, some customers prefer phone communication, some prefer e-mail, and some prefer other methods, such as meeting in person.

Inside the News

Check out the latest economic news and views.

▶ advancenewsletter.com



THANK YOU FOR BEING A VALUABLE BUSINESS CLASS CUSTOMER!

Business Class Internet and TV
Billing and Tech Support: 1.800.391.3000



an e-mail or paper invitation. Then, follow up via phone. For those people who RSVP, be sure to call them a couple of days prior to the event and tell them you look forward to seeing them. This practice demonstrates you are a good communicator, and will be a good communicator should they choose to purchase from you. The practice also motivates them to attend the event rather than cancel or be a no-show.



Studies show that in down economic times, customers are even more cognizant of the way they are treated. They are much more sensitive and want to give their business to companies they truly believe have earned it.



Another proven practice to building and strengthening relationships with your clients and prospective clients is to be a resource to them. Find ways to be relevant, helpful and available to your clients during the entire sales process. Successful sales professionals know the key to gaining and retaining business is to create an incredible service experience for every customer.

Studies show that in down economic times, customers are even more cognizant of the way they are treated by businesses. Customers are much more sensitive to their experiences and they want to give their business to companies they truly believe have earned it and deserve it, and not to companies who take them for granted.

They realize they have choices and they keep those choices in mind during the entire sales process.

Be a resource by making it a habit to give your clients status updates at various stages during the sales process. Let them know you're tracking their order and will keep them updated throughout the process. This practice strengthens your relationship with them by helping to relieve any anxiety they have about their order processing. Let them know when their order has been submitted. Let them know when the order is processed, when it's shipped, and if any issues occur during the shipment. Of course, if there are issues with the shipment, let them know what measures you're taking to remedy it. Call them a month after they've received their order and ask them how they like their new product or service.

The cost to provide great service through relationships and resourcefulness is much less, and much more rewarding, than the cost of losing clients due to lackluster service. Remember that unhappy customers tell an average of 10 people about their experience, so you stand to lose potentially 11 clients as a result of poor service. Keeping clients happy and establishing yourself as a valuable resource to them will keep your business alive and well during any economic time. ■

Case In Point

Southwest Airlines has earned a reputation for being 100% focused on excellent customer service. Recently, Southwest reported an 8.8% increase in revenue passenger miles. Its load factor, the percentage of seats that were filled, increased 11% from a year prior to 74.7%. Southwest commissioned several studies that showed airline travelers detest baggage fees. Southwest chooses not to charge a baggage fee. As a result, the airline has further strengthened its customer relationships and loyalty. Airlines who charge baggage fees, such as Delta, American, US Airways, and United, all reported decreases in revenue passenger miles, which no doubt factored into the decreases.

Q: How can I build a relationship of trust and understanding with my prospective client?

A: Prepare a list of questions to ask your prospect when you meet with them. Plan questions that will elicit specific information about their business, goals, objectives, challenges, pain points, etc. Listen carefully to what they are saying and offer valuable ideas to solve their current and future issues.

5 KEYS TO BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH CLIENTS

1 Exceed expectations at every turn. Offer valuable suggestions to make their life easier, and make them look good to their superiors.

2 Understand their needs and wants—including what motivates them to purchase. What are their pain points?

3 Know your customer—including their demographics and their purchase history.

4 Ask for referrals. If you're doing a great job, they'll be glad to provide a referral.

5 Plan and control your communication with them—don't over- or under-communicate.