

The Value of a Satisfied Client

One of the ways to grow your business may be right under your nose, yet most business owners fail to leverage this opportunity. The opportunity is the value of a satisfied customer/client that can increase your business not only through 'repeat' business but also through 'referrals'. A client who is satisfied is like a hidden sales person for your company. Their 'word-of-mouth' endorsement can pull a lot of weight when they tell others about the great service you can provide.

Developing Relationships

Start off on the right foot when you first do business with a new client. Take the time to develop your relationship, it will be well worth it. *Get to know your client.* Ask the right questions and take the time **to listen**, instead **of selling**, which enables you to discover your client's needs and requirements.

Become a resource/advisor to your client – you are there to help them solve their problem, and if you can't help them, refer them to others that can. If they see you as a resource, they will ask for your assistance and advice, which in turn strengthens your relationship. Provide information to prospective and current clients that would be helpful to them and delight them even more by passing along business leads and referrals.

A suggested formula for sales encourages business to devote: **40%** of your sales on building rapport and trust with your client; **30%** on analyzing your clients' needs (through relevant questions); **20%** preparing your needs/benefit presentation or proposal; and only **10%** on closing the sale. If you invest the time up-front, less effort is required to close the sale – in fact, clients will be asking you "when can we get started?"

Keeping in Touch

It's been stated that 80% of business is lost in North America due to the apathy after the sale. Most clients take their business elsewhere because of lack of contact. We put so much initial effort into "wooing" new clients, but once we get them, we tend to forget them, yet still expect them to give us repeat business. A great saying says: "**The CLOSING of the Sale, is really the BEGINNING of the Sale**", especially if you are building a long-term relationship with your client.

How often do you keep in touch with your past clients? If you don't keep in touch, you can be sure that your competitors will be approaching your clients. Ongoing client contact will reap numerous business and even personal rewards. Keeping in touch shows clients that you are interested in maintaining a relationship with them, as well as, it keeps your company on their "radar".

The same strategy should be used for inactive clients. Call them to find out why they are no longer doing business with you. This shows your concern and could also alert you to some problems. Ask them what it would take to get their business back and make a big fuss when they return. Remember "unhappy customers don't complain – they simply don't return!"

There are numerous ways to keep in touch and build relationships. Here are a few ideas:

- ◆ Ask clients to evaluate the product or service you have provided. Not only is this another way to keep in touch, but it also demonstrates your interest in improving your service and can solicit some good feedback, testimonials and even referrals (if you ask for them);
- ◆ Everyone sends Christmas cards, how about sending cards at Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day, or an Anniversary Card to mark 1, 2 or 3 years of doing business with you. Plan a client appreciation event, and if they have been a long term client, do something extra-special.
- ◆ Send them articles or emails that relate to their business, inform them of seminars or other meetings that may be of interest to them, or invite them to join you to attend an event.
- ◆ Acknowledge all referrals with a phone call, thank you note, invite them for a lunch or dinner, send a gift certificate or dinner voucher. Keep in touch and let them know what happened with the referral (even if the business didn't materialize).
- ◆ Email or mail updates to announce any new products or services you are offering, and other relevant information.
- ◆ Provide past clients with preferred rates or offer yearly specials.
- ◆ Ask your clients' for their advice (people are delighted to give their opinion) on a new service or product you may be launching.
- ◆ Get to know more about your clients and their business so you can refer business their way.

Satisfied clients will gladly tell others about your business and service and referrals your way. By developing client trust and rapport; exceeding their expectations; helping them build their business and keeping in touch, your clients will become an important business alliance that can maximize your business opportunities, marketing and sales success!

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