

Customers Are People

- The first thing you need to do with customers is establish rapport or connect to them. Find something you have in common with them outside of your business. Be genuinely interested in them as a person and get to know them. The better you know them, the better you can help them. If a customer feels like they are your friend, you will have a customer for life.
- When you connect with your customers, you will find out what kinds of thing they like and don't like. You can easily see the problems they face and if your business can help meet those needs. You want to identify any problems and present solutions; it is that simple. They are probably calling your business because you offer something that they find helpful and valuable. The more information you can give them, the more they will trust you. The more they trust you, the more they will want to do business with you.
- If you are talking to a customer and they ask something you don't know, simply say, "That is a great question. Let me find out." You are supposed to be a pro, so the better developed your business is the less of these kinds of questions you will have. Words are important and here is why. If you say, "I don't know." Your brain says, "Oh, we don't know, so let's not bother trying to figure it out." If you say, "Let me find out." Your brain starts accessing all parts of your memory associated with the question. It brings to the top of your memory relevant data, so when you are searching online or asking someone for the answer, you have a prebuilt knowledge base to work from.
- When meeting with customers in a professional setting, make appointments. If they call you or visit you in your office, before ending the conversation ask, "When can we talk again?" Don't settle for, I will get back to you later. Remind them, tenderly, that you are a busy person and you value them as a client. You would like to schedule them into your calendar, so 'we don't miss an opportunity to meet.'" You want to show them that value them as a client and the time they have spent with you. If they don't want to set a date, ask them if they mind if you call them in about a week. Then, when they leave put it on your schedule. Stick to the commitment of your schedule. You can set reminders on your phone an hour or thirty minutes ahead of time or have someone remind you. Sticking to your commitments will speak volumes as you develop relationships with your clients.
- After the meeting, stay in touch.

- You can send them a card to say thank you for your interest, thank you for meeting with me or whatever.
- You can post a comment on their facebook wall or on their twitter saying you enjoyed meeting with them. Be encouraging and genuine. Put your personal spin on the conversation and point out some interesting tidbit from what you talked about or something you learned based on what they said. If you are smart, you will include a bit about what you do and tell them they can contact you anytime for more info on your business. Their friends will see it and may respond if they have a similar interest.
- Send them an email telling them how much you appreciate the meeting. Can you imagine meeting with a client. He leaves feeling good about the meeting, but thinking of other things. Then, when he gets to his office, he checks his email and there is a message from you encouraging him and reminding him about the meeting.
- Ask for referrals. Anytime you meet with someone and it is an enjoyable experience, ask if they know of anyone who might benefit from your services. Many of them will tell others on their own, but this prompter reminds them about others that may need your services. You may even offer a bonus if they refer a friend. You can say something like, "I really like working with you. If you have any friends who might benefit from my services, would you mind giving me their name or at least passing along my business card. If I do business with one of your friends you referred to me, I will take 10% off your next bill. If you bring me 10 people, that means a free month for you." Show them the value you place on getting to know their friends.
- Reminder about ROI. Remember, you are paying for referrals, but the value of the customer is worth so much more than you offer. Let's say that you offer lawn service maintenance for \$100 a month. A customer is worth \$1200 a year. If you give one month free, you are still making an 1100% increase for your money. Would you exchange a \$100 bill for \$1200? Yes, if not, we need to talk. Now, let's say the average customer stays with your service for three years. That means the lifetime value of your customer is \$3600. Your \$100 bonus, gained you \$3600 for the lifetime of the customer. Not to mention, that if you add services like sprinkler installation, you have just boosted your sales even more and did not have to gain any extra customers. Remember, to grow a business you get more customers, increase your prices or find a way to offer them more services.
- As you develop your business, you will want to get feedback for your online and marketing presence. Ask for testimonies. A testimony is a positive review of your business. It can be a

written or video response from a customer about your business or service. Basically , if a customer likes you, ask if they would mind giving you a testimonial. You can whip out a camera and record them on the spot, they can email you their thoughts, or you can jot down what they say and type it up later. If you treat the customer well, you will receive these comments without even asking. They will respond and tell you how your business touched their life. A touched life will speak louder than any coupon or special offer. With today's social networks, customers can immediately share their experience, so make sure it is a good one

- What about dissatisfied customers? Well, if they leave a negative review on your site make sure and follow up with them immediately. Try to come to a beneficial resolution (think win/win). If you cannot solve the problem, find someone who can. The more you go out of your way to help with genuine concern, the more that customer will value you. That being said, there are some people who are never satisfied and gripe just to gripe. Part ways and don't look back. You cannot do business with everyone, so if you don't like someone then don't do business with them. Some personalities clash and part of business is connecting to those you work best with. Don't exclude people, just don't put more effort into a customer that you will loose
- I want to share with you the process all of your customers go through when they buy. It is good to be aware of this process because if you know where your prospects are, you can help bring them to the next step.
 - First, the customer becomes aware of a need or they want to solve a problem. This is the awareness. They are aware they need something.
 - Next they begin to look for information. This is the research stage. Here is the stage many prospects will find you and you want to be where they are looking. They want to solve a problem and if you can connect to them, you could have a great customer.
 - Even if you are the solution, many customers will then look for alternatives. Many people will shop around to see if there are other options, better prices and all those things. If it is a big purchase and they ask you for a quote, they will probably gather three quotes from three different companies to make sure they are getting the best deal. If you have connected to them well, they will come back to you and negotiate according to their research. Don't be afraid to back up your prices and what you offer that others may not offer. (Remember, you want to know your competition.)
 - The last phase is the one we like best, they actually purchase. Even if they call you and are ready to buy, they have gone through a long process of making a decision. If you

talk to them and get to know what brought them to your company, you can use that information to get other customers through the sales process quicker.

- If you focus on the benefits and value you can get past many ideas that your customer may have in their head. Always, set the value and benefits after introducing the problems that you solve. Then, when it comes to handling objections, you have been proactive. The objections that customers have are usually due to a bad interaction with your business or another business similar to yours. Talk to them politely and let them have their say. Many times these customers just want to be heard. They may 'cool off' as they talk to your customer service department, which is usually you. If they are angry, try to get them to talk about what specifically upset them. Tell them you will do better in the future and you value them as a customer. Again, if they have a legitimate concern, fix it immediately. Then, thank them for bringing it to your attention.

ACTIONS TO TAKE:

- Talk to someone you know who would be an ideal customer. Ask if they would be willing to chat with you about your new business idea. . .tell them you are not trying to sell them anything, just get their opinions (when they are heard, they may purchase from you anyway)
- Create a problem/solutions sheet for your business. What kind of things might a customer want to know more about? What kind of things might they not understand? What would they think about your business if they did not know you? A good way to do this is to look at the negative comments on your competitors sites.