

11 Ways to Attract and Retain Your Ideal Customer

The problem with promotion

Each year it gets harder to capture and retain the attention of buyers and business decision makers. Everyone gets swamped with sales literature, telemarketing and advertising. The question is whether the time has come to move beyond “promotion” and look more closely at other ways of developing a reputation and building great relationships?

We might want to invert the effort, time and money that we spend on creating sales leaflets, direct mail and advertisements and concentrate our efforts on tactics that enable us to increase the response rates of our marketing.

To genuine lead generation

Rather than hit the market with yet another message, what if we aim to deploy tactics in the heart of the niche, and let our reputation appreciate in the minds of a greater number of potential buyers that we can siphon off into a reservoir of warm leads for the future?

Bluntly stated - such a strategy has everything to do with finding a compelling reason for our customers to buy and then building relationships with them before, during and after sales. This means finding a clear customer want, building a list, and working with the right marketing approaches and compelling materials.



Beyond lead generation

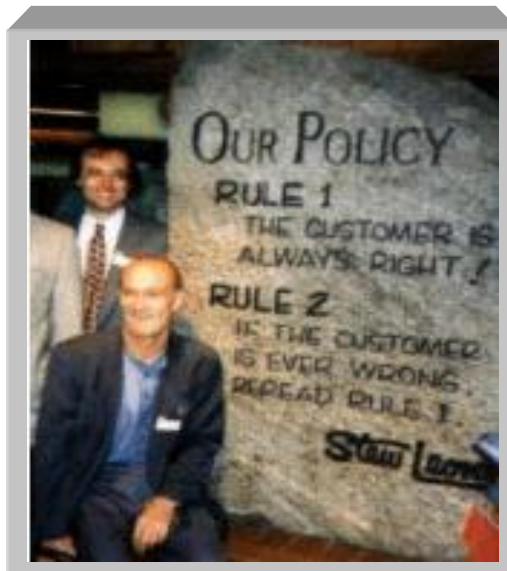
However, there's a world of difference between attracting enquiries and converting them into customers. We need to build on lead generation and then focus on conversion and customer loyalty. This means leading interested buyers to the solution they want with ongoing 'sales' efforts and information that offers value, setting up a system for customer service that wins us more business and turns our customers into advocates who buy more from us and who refer other people to us.

Whatever the size and type of business, the imperatives are unvarying; a reason to buy, lead generation, conversion and advocacy. Yet it's possible to be so close to the businesses that these simple solutions for growing and developing business are overlooked in some broad and standardised strategy.

The following tips have been selected for rural business owners who want the essential routes to marketing success. You may have wondered why I have chosen to cover 11 tips and not the usual '10 top tips'? Well as you will see, giving that little bit extra is what it is all about!

1. Offer a product that is so unique or even up-to-the-minute that your business will be seen to be associated with that offering. Offer assurance of continuity of quality. Extend a product and a valuable service to make the product more useful to the customer.
2. Carve out a niche or two and become the most dominant player serving that niche. Examples that come to mind are those developed for *Lemsip*; first "A hug in a mug" and then "Life goes on." A really nice bonus to this approach is you can

- usually raise your prices dramatically when
3. you s Can you become known by an offer you make? There is an accountant that offers his clients a 100% refund on finishing his customers' accounts when they refer four new clients.
4. Harness the influence of the net. A specific web page, compelling offer for a designated niche, list building and materials could bring you bucket loads of leads. Specialise in this manner.
5. Work on building your list. You might have the best product in the world but if you're not reaching your target audience you'll flounder, so it's absolutely vital to build your database of hungry buyers clamouring for your product.
6. While promotion, sponsorship, endorsements, great publicity (brochures, newsletters, personal selling and leaflets) are helpful in building lists, they are expensive yet the internet offers enormous potential for those prepared to invest energy and creativity in developing great web-based resources.
7. Most people are aware of the quality of customer service provided by Nordstrom, Richer and others. Why not create your own over the top customer response system and word of mouth advertising will flow liberally. One of the greatest ways to kick this off is to over deliver on your first customer contact.
8. Give your customer something more than you promised, give them a gift, and give them a related service for free. I know of a



- B&B that offers long-standing visitors FREE accommodation! And what could that do for their business!!
9. If you don't have a systematic referral programme you are missing out on one of the simplest, cost effective ways to generate your highest quality customers. Referrals are powerful because they come from a credible third party that has experienced first hand, the benefits of doing business with you.
 10. View your customers as long-term friends. Redefining your business from the customer or client's perspective as the basis of your philosophy, so that you protect and benefit them at the highest level possible.
 11. Invest in your customers to create advocacy and an on-going relationship so that instead of waiting passively for them to return, they keep coming back over and over and over again and look to you for all kinds of products and services.

Try these moves. Let me know how you get on as I'm sure you'll be delighted with the results.

I hope these moves help. Try them. You will be delighted with the results.

Incidentally! Your feedback is invited. Here's a question: What is your biggest marketing challenge? Please note, while I can't promise a personal reply to each and every response, I will devote future papers to the most pressing reader concerns.

Best wishes,



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