



Deliver great customer service and high value perception, expect higher profits

able for long.

Good customer service is all about bringing customers back. And about sending

HOT TRENDS by Bill Carlson

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Why do people buy your products and services? Why do they purchase any product or service? One thing is for certain: it's not about the price.

Small business owners are always faced with pricing issues. It's a common fallacy that people buy based on price. Well some do, but most people buy based on value or rather their perception of value. Many small business owners begin their business life with the thought that they will enter their market and simply offer what they have at a slightly lower price and all will be good. In truth it's not the best or even a good idea.

Instead you should compete on value and service and every thing you do should be about increasing the perceived value of your product and services in the eyes of your potential consumers.

Don't be afraid to set your prices according to what the market will bear. Your admission, rental and retail prices should be determined by the value and quality of the products and services you offer.

There will always be some other business that can charge less than you can. A better option is to charge what you will and offer value for the price. Give customers the perception that your products and services are a better value than the competition and you have a good chance of getting them. Back that up with real value to maintain that perception and you will create loyal customers who come back again and again and again.

Don't try to give them the best price, give them the best value.

A Profit Mentor client recently sent me an e-mail stating, "It's like you always said, many of us think we aren't selling enough and the answer is to lower our prices. However, raising our prices is what leads to more sales. Most of the time people see low prices and think the value is less than the higher priced products and services, otherwise they would be closer in price."

Make it known that you offer the best birthday parties, best venue for private parties, good food and beverage service at fair prices, well maintained quality rental skates or bowling shoes, fun entertaining activities for everyone, and great customer service performed by knowledgeable caring staff members.

Good customer service is the lifeblood of any business. You can offer promotions and price incentives to bring people in, but unless you can get some of those customers to come back your business won't be profit-

them away happy – happy enough to pass great news about your business along to others, who may then give you a try for themselves and become repeat customers.

The essence of good customer service is building relationships with customers. I like to use the term of "customer caring." When the customer knows that a business really does care about them the customer pursues the relationship.

From ownership to management to front line personnel, caring development is the catalyst to insure customers have memorable experiences each time they visit your business.

How do you go about developing such relationships? By training all personnel to have a caring attitude and act accordingly; "You will be judged by what you do, not what you say."

Providing good customer service can easily add 20% - or more to your yearly gross revenue. If you truly want to have good customer service and high value perception, all you have to do is ensure that your business consistently does these things:

Answer your phone and update your website.

Get call forwarding. Hire staff if you need to. But make sure someone is answering your phone when someone calls your business. People want to talk to a live person not voice mail. You can publish office hours to condition your customers to the times you do cover the phones. Make someone responsible to update your website and make sure the emails are answered promptly.

Don't make promises unless you will keep them.

Reliability is a key to any relationship and good customer service is no exception. Think before you promise – because nothing annoys customers more than a broken one.

Listen to customers.

Let your customer talk and show him that you are listening by making the appropriate responses, such as suggesting how to solve the problem.

Deal with complaints.

No one likes to hear complaints, and many of us have developed an attitude that "You can't please all the people all of the time." However, you may be able to address the immediate complaint and please this one person this one time and position your business to enjoy the benefits of good customer service.

Be helpful – even if there's no profit in it.

Think about a time that you went into a business and received outrageous, over-the-top service. How did you feel? How many people did you tell about what happened? When was the last time you or one of your employees took action and created a positive, outrageous service moment?

Train your staff to be always helpful, courteous and knowledgeable.

Do it yourself or train several employees to be your trainers. Empower your staff to make good customer service decisions so they do not have to say, "I don't know," and if they do they respond by saying, "I will get the person that can help you."

Give more than what is expected.

Since the future of all businesses lies in

keeping customers happy, think of ways to elevate your business above the competition. Consider the following:

What can you give customers they can't get elsewhere? Free skating or bowling lessons for first timers would be a great starter program with high value perception.

What can you do to follow-up and thank them for coming? Make sure someone thanks customers for coming and give them something to get them to come back again.

What can you give to a customer that is totally unexpected? Be creative and plan each week perhaps free coffee for adults. Sit down with guests, treat them to a PEPSI and listen to what they have to say. Some of your best ideas will be generated from doing this on a regular basis...and the customers will be talking about it to their friends.

Treat employees well.

Employees are your internal ambassadors and need a regular dose of appreciation. Thank them and find ways to let them know how important they are. Treat your employees well and they will treat your customers well. Appreciation starts at the top. Treating customers and employees well is contagious and equally important.

