

## Encouraging repeat clientele

Here are nine, easy to follow steps you can use to create customer loyalty and maintain customer satisfaction:

1. Build an unbeatable bundle of products and services. If you want to keep your customers, make sure they can get what they want without leaving your premises. Take a cue from Amazon.com: Amazon may have started selling books, but today, surfers stay in its online store for greeting cards music, videos, tools, toys, software, and with the zShops initiative, to shop as many small, independently-owned stores as the company can cram into cyberspace.
2. Give your customers an incentive to come back. Be it a gift, a freebie, a discount, special financing, or a chance to win a competition, customers come back for incentives. It's no coincidence that all the major oil companies, telcos, airlines, retailers and visa companies offer loyalty schemes where customers earn bonus points and can redeem these points for rewards.
3. Create goodwill and generate loyalty by sponsoring sports groups or social clubs or special interest groups.
4. Stand behind your product and reap the rewards of trust. If your customers don't trust you, they won't come back. Take the Warehouse for example where everyone gets "a money-back guarantee".
5. Support good works and your customers will support you. Doing well by doing good is a powerful loyalty builder. How's this for an example: A children's clothing manufacturer encourages customers to return their purchases when their kids have stopped wearing them. The customers get a 20% discount on their next order, the manufacturer keeps the customer buying, and the needy get 1,000 articles of returned clothing per month. Everybody wins.
6. Know your gold customers and treat them best of all. The Pareto Principle means the top 20% of your customers contribute 80% of sales. For example: A panel beater gets 70% of their business via insurance company referrals. So instead of spending lots of money on advertising the company shouts the insurance claims mangers and their partners to race car meetings, horse races and movie previews.
7. Make it easier to buy from you than your competitor. Seventh Wave Wetsuits make customised and off the rack wetsuits. All the customer needs to do is email their measurements and colour requirements and their new wetsuit is couriered out to them within a week.
8. Go and get 'em. A Christmas tree grower knows that it's tough to earn the loyalty of customers who only come in once per year, so it sends a thank you note with a twist. Buy your Xmas tree from them and a thank you note arrives the following Christmas... along with free delivery of that year's tree.
9. Find out what your customers want and give it to them. Listen! An award winning, fine dining restaurant found its customers wanted a less formal style of dining. So the restaurant changed the décor, staff uniforms and menu. It continued to receive rave reviews while a lot of its competitors went out of business.

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- This information is provided by The Small Business Company:

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