

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP BLUEPRINT

*for
small business owners*

**how to develop &
maintain great
relationships with your
customers**



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Where a customer is concerned, all business owners need to be expert “relationship builders.” What’s more, all business owners need to be expert “relationship managers.”

Your life as a good business owner is defined by the relationships you keep, because relationships is where it’s at, if you want to grow your business. One of the most important relationships in business is the relationship you have with your customers.

If you’re in business, you know that without the customer, however your group may define that term (clients, patients, accountholders, constituents, buyers, callers, owners, renters, for example) your business will cease to exist. Without the customer, your business becomes nothing. The customer can fire you, at anytime, merely by taking her or his business somewhere else.

As a business owner, if you don’t do a great job of giving your customers something they are interested in, you end up losing them.

And so, whether you are in financial services, automobile sales, bookselling, or any of the thousands of other businesses out there, the customer is king – or queen.

Where your customers are concerned, you need to be an expert “relationship builder” and a you need to be great at managing that relationship.

Your success in your chosen business will greatly depend on how well you deliver value to your customers – and how well you cultivate your relationships with your customers to keep them coming back as repeat buyers.

There are five steps to developing and maintaining successful relationships with your customers...

One: Show respect to the customer.

Right from the initial contact, be it a new customer walking in at the door, or the customer calling you on the phone, or hitting your website – you have to treat this customer as if he or she is the most important person in your world.

Here's an all too familiar scenario (maybe something similar has happened to you?):

You stop in at the counter of some retail outlet. The woman behind the counter doesn't even greet you. She waits until you speak. She doesn't suggest any items you could be interested in, doesn't ask many questions. So you "help yourself." And when the amount due comes up on the cash register, she lets the register display do the talking – because she can't even be bothered to tell you how much you need to pay. It's as if you are a piece of scrap paper that blew in through the door...

This "salesperson" or "shop attendant" hasn't shown you any respect. Most people are sort of used to this treatment and it

rarely bothers them. But look at it from the profits point of view: This shop attendant or sales clerk, or whatever you want to call her could have made a bigger sale by suggesting things to you, smiling at you, and carrying on a conversation. And if this was your first time at this particular location, it'll likely be the last.

Here's how she could have done a better job:

1. She should have greeted you as you entered the building.
2. She should have engaged you in a little conversation.
3. She should have suggested other items. If this was a fast food takeaway, she could have suggested cookies, a larger drink, a different kind of sandwich, or the shop's "2 for 1" special.
4. She should have been pleasant with you (or any of her other customers).
5. She should have thanked you for your purchase, and asked you to call again.

Now, all of these things don't cost a dime, and so it's not that difficult to show respect to a customer – any customer.

Small things such as addressing your customer by name can do a lot to cement your relationship to your customer. In general, businesses do better when they show respect.

There's a local café I used to frequent some years back to get some writing done. The owner knows my name – and she has my

coffee ready whenever I walk in the door, such that I don't even have to go up to the counter. She delivers my Arabic coffee just as I like it; she chats me up some, and then she leaves me alone, because she knows I like it that way. I continue going to this café, even though it's no longer as convenient for me as it used to be, when I lived in a different part of town. Why? Because I feel I get respect from the owner.

People feel they deserve respect – and they do. Customers are our bread and butter – and they deserve our respect.

Some businesses treat customers well only to get their money – and they aren't interested in anything but a "one night stand." Those businesses usually don't see the customer again.

Two: Deliver what the customer wants

Has this happened to you? You go to a car salesman and he spends a lot of time and effort trying to sell you a car that you don't want, a car you won't be buying from him or anyone else for that matter. It's always annoying, and if it wasn't for decency I think we should tell off people like that!

Imagine going to a bakery to buy a doughnut and having the baker try to sell you a hamburger bun, instead...

Forcing your customer to buy something that he or she doesn't want, through hard selling practices, is altogether a bad idea. Your customer may be temporarily placated, but sooner or later, he's

going to figure out that the hamburger bun isn't a donut after all. Guess who just lost a customer...

Lots of businesses try to sell people stuff that they really don't want – just because that's what the business happens to have in stock.

You're far better off learning what the customer wants – and selling them that.

If your customer doesn't want what you're selling, whatever that is, or if they don't want it at the price you're selling it at, you're a lot better off learning how to offer what they want, at the price they want, than resorting to hard-sell tactics to get them to buy something they have no real interest in.

Third: improve the relationship with the customer.

Websites such as Amazon actively work to improve their relationship with their customers. I'm an Amazon customer; they've never seen me or met me, but they are constantly improving their relationship with me, by suggesting other items that I might be interested in, and in many other ways.

If you bought a new Smartphone off Amazon, they will get in touch to recommend a charger for the same phone. If you buy a book on Abraham Lincoln, they'll get in touch to recommend a book on Thomas Jefferson. You may not buy the books Amazon recommends to you, but you would appreciate the email...

Now, these recommendations from Amazon are obviously a form of selling – but they are also helping the customer. This is state of the art customer relationship building in other words.

Other companies do this as well. A bank will suggest other services to you, and they are also constantly developing new services that will be helpful to their customers. Car companies have learned to listen to their customers – and to put their customers' needs into the next car design, etc

For the small business owner, reaching out to your customers could be as simple as giving your customer a call when something they would be interested in comes through the door. You want to deepen the relationship – by learning what the customer needs, and then actively working to fulfill those needs.

Fourth: make your relationship with the customer a “win-win” relationship

In order for your relationship with your customers to deepen, you need to give as well as take. In other words, both you and the customer should win from the transaction. You give them value, they give you patronage. Whenever the cost of maintaining their relationship with you or your business exceeds the value that your customers are getting from it, you'll lose their patronage.

You therefore need to deliver, or be perceived by the customer to be delivering, more value in the transaction than they receive in return.

In order to get the customer to keep a relationship with you, you have to practice win-win in all you do – in other words you have to give more value than you get.

Fifth: you need to maintain the relationship.

A great relationship with your customer isn't something that just happens – you work at it. You need to work on maintaining it. We have seen how to develop it in the above steps. This step is all about the drive to keep contact with our customers. You can do it by special mailings, the occasional phone call (if your line of business makes that appropriate), or by ensuring that you protect and empower your customer.

How are you maintaining contact with your customers? What way should you be using?

Finding, developing, and keeping a customer relationship is sometimes a pretty tricky dance, but it will work to your advantage in the long run (the Return on Investment is very high!)

Incidentally, if you are not emailing your customers, you could be leaving a lot of money on the table – and failing to maintain your relationship with them. Email is the new way to keep in touch with your customers, whether it's marketing to them or educating them.

I will be covering emailing marketing in a later guide, but if you want to get a sneak preview on how email marketing automation

works, I would recommend you [grab a free trial here for one month](#).

A lot of the emails you will use in your customer engagement (for example follow up emails, welcome emails, customer education emails, etc) are best automated, with an [autoresponder](#).

"It takes more than capital to swing business. You've got to have the A. I. D. degree to get by - Advertising, Initiative, and Dynamics." – Isaac Asimov

Here are some of the ways how emailing your customers can help develop and maintain your relationship with them – and grow your business in the process. You can use email to:

- Welcome new customers or clients and then encourage them to upgrade their experience by purchasing from you again.
- Introduce new leads to you and your brand, and turn strangers into friends.
- Educate your customers about your product or service.
- Inform your existing customers about new products, improvements in service, or promotions you are running. This is effective in driving new sales.
- Deliver marketing materials to customers. When you use email marketing as a way to advertise your business, you can eliminate some of the high costs of advertising.

- Deliver follow up content to customers who bought from you. Whenever someone buys a product or service they should also be taught the proper way to get the most from that product or service. This is a great way to transform your customers into fans of your business. You could create an automated email series that teaches lessons and tips, or send them links to a how-to video, or a getting started guide, etc.

Ever heard of the “**holy trinity of repeat sales**”? Here it is – *up-sell, re-sell, and cross-sell*.

Your best possible source of revenue is your existing customers. This is a fact you can take to the bank.

Your existing customers are your best possible source of revenue! Which means you should have a regular program to stay in contact.

What are you doing about repeat customer sales? When was the last time you contacted each customer, and made them an offer of some kind? ... What – you're waiting for them to call you?

You've got to contact your customers. Under any pretext, for any reason. Why? To solidify and maintain your relationships, and reconfirm why you want to do business with them. To understand your value from their perspective. And lastly, to make sure they are being served properly and to sell them everything they need.

If you are not using email marketing in your business, [get a free trial today](#) with this feature-rich email marketing solution for the small business.

In closing...

Enjoy this report? Did you receive value?

This is actionable information that will grow your business if you take action on it. Normally I would sell this report for a minimum of \$7, maybe more, but I didn't do that, did I?

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