

WE KNOW

SALES

PROTECTING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

QUICK GUIDE

This Quick Guide will provide you with tips to help you retain customers through the tough times.

CONDUCT A FAIR AND THOROUGH INVESTIGATION

When the economy hits a low, it becomes even more important to look after your existing customer base. Customer retention should be your first priority, because it has been conservatively estimated it costs you 5 times more to find new customers than it does to retain existing customers. Ensure you offer brilliant customer service – and your customers will come back for more.

To set up effective processes to retain your customers, a good place to start is to look at your service through the eyes of your customer. What makes your products/service appealing to them, what sort of service do you provide and how efficient is the process they have to go through to purchase the product or service.

One of the best forms of advertising can be word of mouth from your satisfied customers.

Below are some tips to help you retain your customers:

- Identify who your key/top customers are and why. Learn to think like your customers – understand them; their needs, their motivations and provide them with what they want
- Staff need to understand your customers are top priority and customer retention is paramount. Give them the flexibility to provide the solutions which will satisfy your customers' needs, while keeping the sale profitable
- Involve your customers in the solutions to problems – they will feel empowered
- Not all customers are equal – by knowing who your most important customers are, you can then focus on them – with limited resources – focusing your efforts on your strategic partners and major customers will maximise your return
- Find every possible way to add extra value to what you offer your customers – have staff contribute their ideas
- Follow up with your customers on a regular basis – another opportunity to add value and gather key information relative to your relationship and their purchasing decisions
- Arrange a workshop for a selection of your customers to 'brainstorm' their requirements and expectations
- Have a simple customer feedback process in place. Your customers may have some great ideas. Review and action the feedback – and at the very least thank your customer for the feedback
- Sell your value. Don't leave it to customers to second-guess what you're selling them
- Be prompt, be easy to deal with, be reliable – price then becomes the secondary consideration.

- Think of introducing an induction type process into your business for new customers – you get to know them, and they get to know you
- Back up your customer service – ensure you have an efficient team and processes working in the background to make sure you deliver what you said you would. Communication flows are vital to make this happen
- Make your business processes efficient – inefficiency drives customers away. If they want to pay a bill, make it easy for them – don't insist they complete unnecessary forms straight away. You can always get them to do this when you carry out your follow up
- Customer relationship management is vital. Keep an up-to-date CRM (Customer Relationship Management) database. Use this to record your dealings with your customers, and include personal information such as special dates and their preferences. Use this information to add value to your relationship – e.g. greet them with their preference of hot beverage, send a birthday card
- Train your staff to look beyond the initial enquiry to provide the solution to the next issue that may arise – e.g. don't just answer the question, but offer assistance beyond it
- Train your staff – and arrange refresher training for them
- Take a leadership role in your business – set the example to your staff on how customers should be treated.

The Employers' Chamber has a range of resources available to help you implement the above tips into your business:

Resources

Quick Guides

- Effective Marketing
- Effective Communication
- Identifying Your Core Strengths

For further information on protecting your customer relationships or other aspects of marketing and communicating to your customers, please the business advisory team at The Chamber, email <mailto:info@cecc.org.nz> or call (03) 366 5096.