

Five Tips for Building Strong Customer Relationships

In a recent survey, customers said that the #1 reason they do business with a particular company is because of a relationship with someone within that company. The same survey also showed that 97% of customers did business with a particular salesperson because they liked and trusted that person. Thus, as salespeople, having a strong relationship in which people like and trust us is more important than any other factor in the sales process. It is more important than product performance, service, and even price. That being said, how can we ensure that we are building strong relationships and that we are likeable and trustworthy?

5 Steps to Strong Customer Relationships

1) Focus completely on the customer and how you can help.

The customer always comes first and your primary objective is to help them, even if that means, dare I say, sending them to the competition. Granted, most of the time you'll have a solution and you of course shouldn't be looking for reasons to send the customer to the competition. At the same time, you simply have to have the level of commitment to the customer where you are willing to do whatever you have to do to help them out. This leads to my next two points.

2) Stay on your toes and do what you say you'll do.

You have a customer and you've started to build a solid relationship, you have to keep the ball rolling in the right direction. This means staying on top of things and continuing to have a high level of commitment to the customer, you can't take them for granted once you have them signed on. Also, continue to build trust and credibility by doing what you say you'll do when you say you'll do it. Call when you say you'll call, send items when you say you'll send them.

3) Go above and beyond.

The next step in building a strong, positive relationship is to go above and beyond what the customer expects. Do more than people expect and deliver more than the customer pays for. Words to keep in mind here are: more, better, different. How can you deliver more, how can you be better, and how can you be different, in a good way, from your competitors. This is the one that really builds trust and credibility and builds long-term, happy customers. Always look for ways to surprise people in a good way.

4) Good, solid communication.

Correct, continuous communication is a key to solid, long-term customer relationships. If you fall out of communication for too long, people begin to forget about you and the relationship begins to deteriorate. Also, if there is a miscommunication, or incorrect communication, the relationship can go down hill rapidly. Ask people how often they want to hear from you and in what form, be it phone, text, e-mail, written letter, or other, and then communicate clearly in the frequency and medium they are looking for.

5) Continue to build the relationship.

Once you have a strong foundation in place, continue to work on and build the relationship. This includes getting personal information on customers as well as sharing some of your own. Once you have that information, you want to use it. Send out holiday, birthday, and anniversary cards.

Send out items such as articles, books, and gifts related to their areas of interest. Continue to ask questions that will help you understand your customers better, both personally and professionally. Ultimately, we want all of our customers to be loyal customers and friends. Treat customer relationships as if they are relationships with close friends and family members and nurture them in similar ways.

Follow the five steps above and you will build strong customer relationships in which your customers know, like, and trust you. The bottom line: If you care more about your customers than anything else and treat them right, they will continue to do business with you, send friends and family to you, and you will never have to worry about having enough business, also, your life will most likely be happier and more enjoyable.

~John Chapin