

SATISFYING CUSTOMERS

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A business is about only two things; money and customers. It takes money to get started, customers to keep going, and more money to hold on to existing customers and attract new ones. Hence, the two central activities of every business are marketing and finance.

Finance deals with acquisition, management, and control of money activities that are always strained and competitive. You get money by competing for it, dispense money among contenders for it, and control money by overseeing its use by people who'd rather be left alone.

Marketing gets customers by inducing them to switch from competitors, keeps customers by staying better than competitors, and creates entirely new customers by offering things of such irresistibility that they shatter people's natural inertia, indifference, or active sales resistance.

Marketing is the determination of customers' needs and wants, the development of goods and services to satisfy those needs and wants, and then the delivery of those goods and services to the customer. Then come conceiving, designing, developing, and producing new products or services to fill present or expected unfilled customer needs. The next step is providing (or gathering) the products or performing the services where and when the customer needs them. The final stage is the transfer of the products from the seller to the buyer and the goods or services to where the customer will obtain them.

Customers favor those businesses that give them what they want in products, prices, promotion, and convenience. however, customer wants are always changing. As a result, it's no wonder that customers, the basis of the marketing concept, are constantly being tutidied by marketing managers. In short, the who, what, when, where,

how, and why of customers behavior have to be determined before marketing plans can be made.

Who is the buyer? An important step in market research is to find out who uses, buys, or makes the decision to buy a given product or service. The person who decides what to buy may neither be the user nor the purchaser. In the marketing process, therefore, most marketing tactics deal directly with the decision maker and buyer rather than the user.

What is needed? What is the need that must be satisfied by the product? Many new products have failed because their makers didn't know about or weren't able to satisfy those needs.

When is it needed? Determining when the buyer wants the product is important. As you are probably aware, items purchased mainly for new year's celebration, such as toys, trees, tree lights, and seasonal cards and foods, have a marketing program different from that for products sold uniformly throughout the year.

Where is it bought? In determining the where of customer buying habits, one must see where the buying decision is made, as well as where the actual purchase occurs. For instance, about 30 percent of decisions to buy groceries are made at home and about 70 percent in the store.

How is it bought? Does the purchaser want to buy the product singly, in six-packs, in cases, or in bulk?

Why is it bought? Sound marketing policies are based on a knowledge of customers' buying motives, or why they buy a particular product. Is it price? Status? Is the product being used in ways other than its originally intended use? If so, these could be promoted.

One of the first things we learn in business is that the customer is always right. No matter how irate or pushy the customer was, you had to smile and be polite. The key is to always let him (her) think he (she) is right.

The customer must always be satisfied whatever it takes. It's worth adhering to this philosophy as long as there is a profit to be made.

The secret of successful customer service isn't what you do, but rather how you see people and how you handle the dynamics of the transaction.

Every business needs a steady supply of customers to stay afloat. Increasing the number of customers you have is not necessarily the best way to increase your mar-

ket share. It is a lot more profitable to increase your business with current customers. Your current customers represent your best opportunity for increased profits.

American business focus on keeping customers, since it costs from five to seven times as much to get a new customer as it does to keep one.

Why are so many companies focused on new business instead of selling current customers? Basically, there are two reasons.

First, selling additional products or services to existing customers lacks much of the "thrill of the kill" that one feels when "knocking off" a new customer. For someone who truly enjoys and thrives on selling, getting a new customer is a feeling that is had to duplicate.

Second, getting additional business from an existing customer requires that you deliver exceptional service. In some ways, prospects are easier to sell because they haven't yet experienced beyond the honeymoon. With current customers, promises made have to be kept. Focusing on selling current customers will help discipline everyone in your firm toward delivering on new promises.

If you are looking for new business, you may be ignoring one of your best potential sources : old customers.

It's expensive to find new clients and to get your relationships running smoothly. The only way that your company can make money is to find customers and keep them. That's why it's so important to make sure that you are providing the absolute best customer service. When you can't provide outstanding customer service for your customers, you don't need new ones.

Keep the right goal in mind: don't look for money, look for applause. If you create something of value, the sales will come.

The principal goal of a manager should be to improve customer profit.

To maintain a high level of customer service, you must know how your customers feel about the current service you are providing so that you can determine if you are meeting their needs. When you really listen to your customers you'll find that they can tell you surprising things.

A manager should never forget that value in the eyes of the customer counts, not necessarily value in the eyes of the company's marketing and advertising people.

Marketing is about what people buy, not what you sell. If you understand your

product in terms of what the customer is buying instead of what you're trying to sell, you're well on your way to develop a successful marketing strategy.

Essential customer needs are consistently quality, greatly exceeding in standards, affordable prices, getting sufficient and expected services, being cared of and getting what they want.

Great managers try to satisfy all of their customer needs, don't interrupt the customer who is complaining about something either in person or over the phone, always invite customer into their offices or another private area for the sake of privacy, listen to the customer, permit the customer to state feelings before offering solution, use body language such as an occasional nod, to indicate they understand and care about the customer, be sympathetic and ask what the customer would like to do.

Companies exist to serve customers, and should never forget that customers have plenty to choose from. Therefore, what the customer expects has taken on a key dimension. A satisfied customer has a value greater than money can buy.

The relationship between the organization and the customer is strong and lasting. These companies regard customers as part of the family, they bring customers into the heart of the organization, invite and encourage them to participate in everything from designing products to developing service measures and monitoring quality.

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