

Let Loyalty Be Your Fault

■ By David Schwartz

Running a business is hard; marketing a business isn't much easier. Sometimes you have to make choices, and by letting loyalty be one of your faults it is one of those good mistakes you should make. If you are in the customer service business like a restaurant or retailer, could too much customer loyalty ever be a bad thing? Loyalty is built on trust. Once that trust is established a longterm relationship can be built similar to the bond between a dog and his owner.

In marketing you have to make assumptions, you don't always know if choices will turnout to be the right ones. Even with better tracking and analytics, it's still a crapshoot since you're dealing with human interactions and

impulse decisions. Customers walk in the door, they buy your product and in actuality it may not have anything to do with your marketing campaign or a promotion.

Should that still count as a marketing win?

Do you know which foolproof marketing effort is guaranteed not to fail?

Taking care of your loyal customers. It is that simple, [reward customer loyalty](#). Brands often spend too much money targeting new customers while they forget to nurture the relationships with the loyal customers they already have. Ever hear a customer complain about being pampered, treated with respect or made to feel too special

and valued?

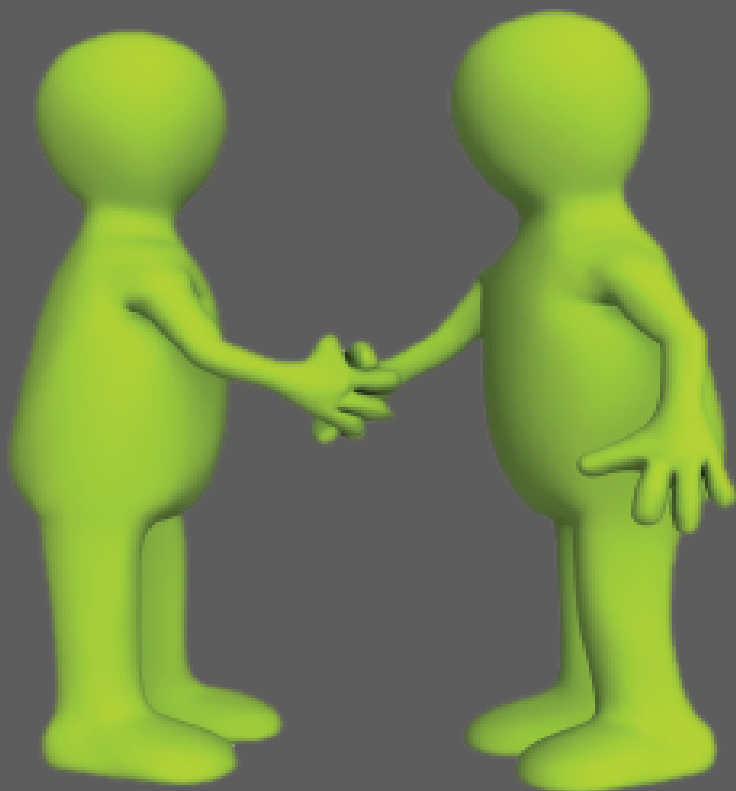
A customer relationship starts the moment they walk in the door. Wait, on second thought that might have been the old way, now a relationship can start before a customer has even touched your brand. Create a relationship built on trust, first. Marketing author Jay Baer calls it "[friend of mine awareness](#)" where the customer already knows who you are before they even consider buying from you.

[Relationships and loyalty](#) go hand in hand. Social media has created a platform for customers to build relationships with brands, no matter the size of the organization or how many restaurants exist. Social Media has created the greatest CRM program to date, sure email is successful and direct



mail with a valuable offer is nice, but what social media allows a loyal customer to do is share their status, their allegiance... their loyalty. Maybe even brag a little bit, and that endorsement is free advertising.

Loyalty is a bond between two parties, a connection built on trust and past success. Relationships are built through shared experiences. Today, when [sharing a brand's story](#)



both parties have an opportunity to contribute and show their mutual loyalty to each other.

How do you go about building loyalty with your audience?

Appreciation:

A little appreciation can go a long way, especially when no strings are attached. You might be surprised at how far a simple thank you goes with customers. While you are at it a token

or gesture representing your appreciation wouldn't hurt, either.

Honesty:

Being honest is simple, smart business. Customers don't always expect brands to be perfect but they sure do expect them to be honest. Being honest about mistakes can be [humanizing for a brand](#), there is nothing wrong with that as honesty can build trust.

Respect:

Do not make the mistake of upsetting your [loyal customers](#), do not abuse the relationship by selling email lists or spamming. Loyalty is gained through respecting boundaries, keep that in mind and treat customers the way you would want to be treated. Remember, a loyal customer already likes you, don't give them a reason to change their minds.

Value:

Value is tricky since it means different things to different people. One way to present value is to [keep expectations in check](#) by informing and educating your audience. Help teach a customer how they can best use your concept from spending less or getting more back in return. [Content Marketing](#) is a great way to educate your customer by sharing tips or tricks of

the trade. Don't be afraid to share a recipe or let them see your popular technique for folding napkins.

Listening:

This is really important; if you are not willing to listen to your most valued customers then who are you going to listen to? Whether it is comments or complaints you need to be listening. Consider using your loyal customers to [crowdsource for ideas](#), such as new menu items or your next location. Start looking at customer feedback as a good thing.

So there you have it, 5 common sense approaches to help you build loyalty with your customers. No matter the business you are in, all customers like honesty, appreciation, respect, value and being listened to. I know I do, now what about you?

About the Author

David is a Brand Strategist focused on building relevant brands, while creating valuable consumer relationships to promote engagement. By utilizing the popularity of digital and mobile media, along with the social web he helps companies understand the power of controlling their content. David started his career working for MTV in New York, he then proceeded to Atlanta to work with the likes of Coca-Cola, Chick-fil-A and the Home Depot. From his time working with companies of all sizes he has learned that a strong brand is the key to long term success by turning customers into brand advocates. Now living in Nashville with his wife and two children, David works with companies of all sizes teaching and consulting on best practices for building a brand in the digital age.

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