

## Talking points: Marketing and Customer Service

- **Is it time for “Magic Marketing?”**

We sometimes wish it were possible to wave some magic wand that would enable us to come up with a marketing program that could work instantly. The reality is marketing is a process, and one that requires planning, implementation, testing and measuring.

So what **can** we do? And now? Before we can answer that question let's look at the following:

- **Three ways to increase your revenue now:**

1. Get past and present customers to buy more often
2. Get past and present customers to spend more
3. Attract new customers and have processes in place to keep them as customers.

- **The formula to generate revenue and profit:**

1. Leads X conversion rate=customers X number of transactions X average sale=revenue X margin =profit

- **So where do we start? With the Marketing Plan!**

1. If you have one, review it: what's working, what's not? Take action.
2. If you don't have one, create one...visit SCORE if you need help.

So to answer our question, what can we do right now?.....

- **Let's look at “cementing” customer relations:**

1. Your best customer is your existing and past customer
2. Do you have a method or data base in place to retrieve names and addresses, e-mail addresses?
3. Can you identify what customers provide 80% of your revenue? Time to concentrate on this group.
4. Cards and letters work, and they're not always “hard sell”
5. Your employees; sales force and sales reps are, in a sense, customers too. What programs are in place to motivate them? Incentives? Rewards?
6. Did you know that if you accept Visa, MasterCard or American Express as payment, these companies can provide you with valuable demographic data on your customer, free?

- **The 0 to 90 day plan of action in the meantime:**
  1. Establish objectives (what you want to achieve over the next 90 days)
  2. State the strategy you will employ to achieve each objective
  3. List the specific tactics you will implement to accomplish your goal
  4. Attach a budget to it. Create a Calendar. (when things will happen)
  
- **What else needs to be addressed in a 90-day plan?**
  1. Sales, (by day, week or month) sales average estimates
  2. Pricing review of goods and services and a strategy developed
  3. Emphasis on your “Core” items or services, generally 70% of the business
  4. Promotional plan (The what, where and when). The message, key point
  5. Tools in place to measure effectiveness. Are your efforts paying off?
  6. Your customer benefits clearly identified and competitive-edge established
  7. If you operate a retail store, how are you communicating to customers in the store? Signing; Merchandise presentation; Profit circle technique.
  
- **Customer Service Secrets...start with Employees**
  1. **Invest in “soft skills training” for your frontline employees**  
It really begins with hiring right at the beginning. You can teach someone how to troubleshoot; handle inquiries. Fulfill requests. Troubleshoot, but how do you teach them how to care? Have heart? Ask yourself; do you put up with mediocrity? Have you set the right expectations on how to treat customers? Have you set the bar high enough?
  2. **Ask yourself, if you lead by example?**  
Are you a good role model for your company? Have you created the right environment for employees so they want to knock it out of the ballpark?
  3. **Do you have a consistent reward program for employees?**  
Do you recognize outstanding contributions on a regular basis? It doesn't have to always be money? Movie tickets... a thank you balloon and candy bar can even do the trick. It's about recognition.
  4. **Do you invest in complaints?**  
What process is in place to address and take action on every complaint you receive. Are you listening to the customer? The silent customer is very costly...they just go away and you have no idea why.
  5. **Do you have a proactive way to get the pulse of your customer?**  
Do you meet with customers? Talk to them? Hold focus groups or meeting to hear them out. Do you communicate back to let them know how you improving service. or addressing any other issue of their concern? Communication must be a two way street.