

MAINTAINING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

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Successful companies know that a satisfied customer is more valuable than a single contact. Further, it's easier to keep a customer than to get one. We spend the time and expense of acquiring new customers and leave little time to maintain the relationship. Dissatisfied customers often don't complain; they just disappear. However, there are several cost-effective strategies that businesses can use to maintain their customer base.

STAYING IN TOUCH

Businesses need to stay in contact with customers on a regular basis. Creating a database with the customer's contact information, and keeping that information current allows you to have a way to reach out and stay in touch. Sending e-mails about upcoming seminars, events or new product launches keep you in the minds of the customers and provides them with a reason to contact you.

GET CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

While staying in touch with customers is important, businesses also need to find out what clients want in terms of products or services. Creating e-mail surveys will help you find out what your company can do to better serve your customers. Keep the surveys concise, with five questions or less. This will generate higher feedback because customers will not feel they are wasting their time.

COURT THE MEDIA

Many people feel that getting in touch with the media can be harmful to a company. However, small businesses are wise to try to get highlighted in the media. Not only does this give you a needed boost in legitimacy—most people regard business owners featured in the media as experts—it gets the word out about your business to both new and existing customers. Industry publications are a great place to start, and they might even agree to profile your company.

PUT YOUR COMPANY OUT THERE

To maintain and build business relationships, you need to be in the public eye in a variety of ways, offering brand consistent information that creates curiosity and encourages your target customer base to develop a relationship with you. Invite customers to do business with you through traditional advertising as well as nontraditional methods such as social networking and community involvement.

MAINTAIN YOUR BRAND

Developing and maintaining a cohesive brand is vital for any company. Once you have a cohesive brand and logo design, let it permeate every aspect of your company. Customers will be more likely to behave as though they have a relationship with you if they feel that they know your business well. Let them get to know you by building brand loyalty, whether it's by sponsoring events that closely relate to your business, or simply making sure to use your brand while working on visible projects. Construction signage is really a great tool for our industry. While a growing business needs to constantly capture new customers, the focus and priority should be on pleasing your existing customer base. One of the key components in marketing and business growth is to spend the majority of your time and effort nurturing customer relationships, so that you get referrals from existing clients and customers. This is a critical strategy that will move you forward in increasing your sales without increasing your budget.

About Sarah S. Berman, President, The Berman Group, Inc. Sarah S. Berman serves as President of The Berman Group, a full-service marketing, public relations and special events firm based in New York City. The firm specializes in serving business-to-business clients in the real estate, construction and professional services industries. The firm's website can be found at www.bermangrp.com.