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How to Stem the Decline of Brand Loyalty

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With brand loyalty on the decline, I think it's time to revisit a concept that I wrote about nearly 10 years ago: If you want customers to be loyal to you, be loyal to them first. Many companies have programs to foster customers' loyalty to them, but what about actively fostering our own loyalty to our customers?! This turns the concept of brand loyalty on its head, and is perhaps the best way to stem the decline of brand loyalty that plagues most categories today.

Here is an updated version of my original post, "[A Brand Loyalty 180](#)," which was prompted back rands

We need to identify ways to be more loyal to our customers. If we expect our customers to:

- go out of their way to buy from us
- pay more for what we offer, and
- continue choosing us even when faced with tempting offers from the competition...

Then perhaps we need to do the same for them – first. Instead of expecting customers to be loyal to us and then rewarding that loyalty (which is how most companies' loyalty programs work), let us consider being loyal to them first. Here are some ideas for how:

1. **Go out of our way for our customers.**



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• Provide our services after hours or on weekends so that we're available whenever our customers need us.

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- Institute “power hours” like Walmart, Home Depot, and JC Penney do, during which employees do nothing else (like stocking shelves or cleaning) besides serve customers.
- Offer to hand-deliver or at least overnight ship products that are out of stock -- at no cost. That’s no *additional* cost. Or maybe, if we don’t have in stock the product a customer wants, maybe we should give it to them for free as soon as it arrives in an attempt to make up for the inconvenience.

2. “Pay” more for our customers.

- Accept expired coupons and extend promotions beyond their designated dates upon request. Why should we penalize a customer we care about for missing a window of opportunity by a few days?
- Offer to provide complimentary “value-added” services. For example, my car repair shop always does a 10-point inspection and a free car wash whenever they work on my car, regardless of the service.
- Retain current prices when our costs increase. Maybe we need to bite the bullet and on occasion, not increase prices even when costs increase out of our control.

3. Continue serving existing customers well even as we seek to acquire new customers.

- Offer equivalent or better deals than the ones we run to promote trial by new customers.
- Acknowledge and thank them for their continued patronage – and not with a coupon or discount off a future purchase, but with a genuine and personal demonstration of gratitude.
- Follow-up on their purchases to ensure they’re satisfied with them – and I don’t mean send an automated email with an online survey for them to complete.

I realize some of these ideas sound very costly – and they might indeed require a significant spend. But if it costs up to five times to acquire a new customer than to retain a new one, and if a satisfied customer can influence others’ purchases through their reviews and social media sharing, then the money we spend on being loyal to our customers could very well be some of the best investments we can make.

Also it’s clear we can’t do these things for every customer. But we should identify our most important customers and demonstrate our loyalty to them. In doing so, we more than likely will increase their value to us, which creates a virtuous cycle of benefit for both parties.

Let’s stem the widespread decline in brand loyalty by making “customer relationship management” truly a two-way relationship. After all, mutual loyalty is what makes personal



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relationships so rewarding — a brand's relationships with its customers should be no different!

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Denise, these are really good points to consider and require a change of mindset!

The language I often hear speaks to acquisition cost, loyalty to a brand, owning the customer (or relationship) - effectively treating the customer as an object to be manipulated, monetized, and from which value is extracted. There is a slow but definitive shift from viewing a customer as an object that you do things to on as

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Brand Leadership Expert, Keynote Speaker, and Author of the bestselling books "What Great Brands Do" a...

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Mohamed Amer you have hit the nail on the head by attributing the decline in customer loyalty to the use of an outdated measuring stick -- and that, in turn, is a result of an outdated mindset. thanks for sharing your insights! ...see more

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