

## The Power of Thank-You

When was the last time you thanked your customers?

This often neglected gesture is a very powerful sales tool. As a small business owner, I want to know that the companies I chose to work with appreciate my business. Here are some of the opportunities you have to thank the people around you.

1. When they place an order or make a purchase of any type. This may sound pretty obvious but my experience has taught me otherwise. Do you remember the last time a retailer thanked you for shopping at their store? Has the cashier at the local grocery store thanked you lately? What about the clerk at the gas station around the corner? How about your suppliers or companies you use to support your business? I use several hotels across the country to conduct my training workshops and some of my sessions are multi-day program which means I can spend several thousand dollars. Yet, I can count on one hand, the hotels who have thanked me for choosing them versus one of their competitors.

2. When they refer you to another potential client. Much of my business is generated through referrals and I take great pains to thank everyone who refers new potential clients to me. A good friend of mine sent many referrals to an associate yet, the other person did not take the time to thank him or reciprocate. Needless to say, my friend has stopped sending potential clients his way. Simply because he wasn't thanked.

3. When they contact you regarding a service issue. Most companies don't think of thanking customers for complaining. Far too often, business people and employees try to redirect the blame or justify what went wrong instead of thanking their customer for pointing out the shortcoming. However, when people do express their concern with something, they are providing you with a golden opportunity to take corrective action and improve your business. Shortly after launching my website, a client encountered a problem and received the incorrect item for an online order she had placed. I thanked her because she helped me correct a problem I didn't know existed.

4. When they make a payment. This morning, as I wrote this article, I received an electronic card from my personal coach who I work with on a regular basis. She thanked me for the timeliness of my payment and commented how quickly she usually receives payment. This, in turn, made me feel good because I now know that she recognizes this. Her thank-you will encourage me to continue my prompt payment habit. If she uses this approach with all her clientele I'm sure she doesn't encounter cash-flow problems very often.

5. When they help you solve a problem. I recently faced a minor problem with one of my clients. I asked one of my key contacts in the organization to look into the matter and in a matter of hours the situation was resolved. Without his help, I might still be dealing with the issue. Assistance or action like this requires recognition and a simple thank-you can go long way to reinforce someone's behaviour.

6. When they are loyal. If you have long-term clients it is critical to thank them for their loyalty. We often take these individuals for granted and forget that they, like anyone else, want to feel appreciated for their business. I firmly believe that we should send regular thank-you cards or notes telling people that we appreciate their business. A friend of mine, who also owns a training company, has a thank-you party every year. He invites many of his customers for an evening of dining and entertainment as a way of thanking them. Plus, it gives them a chance to network with other like-minded people, often resulting in the formation of new business relationships.

There are several ways to you can thank someone. You can say thank-you in person. You can call the other person. You can send an email. Or, you can write a note or mail a card. My preference is to send cards because most people receive very few thank-you cards. An inexpensive card with a few handwritten comments can help you stand out from your competition. Plus, many people will keep a card on their desk which keeps your name in their mind. Yes, it takes some time, but the payoff is usually worth it.

One last comment. I know you are busy and like most business people, that your time is precious and more valuable than ever before. Therefore, I want to thank you for taking the time to read this article. I appreciate it!

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