

WINNING IS A TEAM SPORT

How to increase sales by incorporating winning strategies

By Roy Bardowell, CDDC



I like to consider sales as a sport that only has winners and no losers. That means everyone wins when they buy from me. And who doesn't want to be on the winning side of a game, strategy, argument, or most importantly, a sale?

Viewing a sales transaction as a game that you want to win allows you to strategize the best game plan for success. For example, a business may have every product that your customers could possibly want, but if you do not have a winning formula of quality product and quality customer service, it won't matter.

You must treat your customers with integrity and kindness, or you can kiss your hard work, and maybe even that business, goodbye. Recognizing the value of customer service is essential to the success of your business.

Additionally, it costs more money to acquire new customers than it takes to retain existing ones, so it is worth it, in the long run, to keep your existing customers happy. The list of winning strategies featured in this article offers key steps to gain new customers and keep your existing customers coming back.

Teamwork

There's no "I" in team. That is true in good business practices. I've seen several companies that started out with a grand purpose and lofty goals, and then lost their direction and took a wrong turn, and in some cases almost ended up going under. It took a collaboration of everyone in the company to turn things around.

New owners may make changes that are unsuccessful or not aligned with the core company's founding goals. They may implement deep

budget cuts or decide to lower the quality of the products in order to decrease expenses or produce immediate profits. However, this strategy can backfire. If the quality of the product declines too much, then companies may actually lose customers and/or see a decrease in sales.

Instead of pointing fingers, the group needs to collectively take responsibility to make much needed positive change. It takes the entire team to lead the company into a hole, and it will take the entire team to pull the company out.

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A common goal

Positive change can only happen when everyone involved is on the same page and actively working toward a common solution and goals. When a company falters, a common goal must be established and followed.

The founder of the company may independently make plans or decisions about the company. Regardless of whether the employees consider their plan right or wrong, everyone needs to be on the same page and work as a team to ensure the plan comes to fruition.

From my experience, most installation companies in the door and gate access industry are excellent at communicating company goals. Owners will often take direction and lead their team toward one common goal. That is important because strong leadership is just as critical as having a committed team.

Managers can't simply hire individuals that they think are great, put them together, and assume they now have a great team. Teams consist of people with different egos and personalities, and it's challenging to balance the complexities of group hierarchies — all of which can make cohesiveness challenging. However, when you have a team that really works well together, your company has a greater chance of success.

A clear plan

Working in several family businesses, I have experienced my share of challenging team dynamics. Siblings that are also coworkers can be extremely competitive and sometimes even toxic to one another, ultimately affecting the potential of a company.

I've seen family businesses that started out making record sales but today are only generating a fraction of the business they once boasted. In each case, the father was the company president. When the father died, the stable leadership also disappeared, which started a power struggle among the children and ultimately led to a decline in the company.

Such a decline can happen if the founding president does not have a proper plan in place. When the leader of company leaves or dies, having a plan that clearly outlines a transition of power is critical to the stability and continued success of a company.

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FIVE WINNING STRATEGIES

1 Stay in touch. Reach out to your customers regularly. Use newsletters, individual letters, or emails to deliver news about products, the store, special promotions, and events. Make site visits and send thank-you notes. Invite customers to contact you with questions or concerns.

Utilize these resources to communicate how your company can help meet their needs. Aim to build the greatest relationship possible, because a customer will pick a quality mutual relationship over the lowest price every time.

2 Make excellent customer service a priority. Properly train your team and constantly reinforce the message that the customer come first. Start with the little things like implementing a standard way of politely greeting people on the phone or anyone who enters your showroom.

3 Store collective wisdom. Set up a system for responding to customer inquiries or

complaints. Try and resolve issues during the initial customer contact or, when that's not possible, within one business day.

If they don't know the answer, have your employee let the customer know that you need time to locate the proper information. That demonstrates how committed they are to solving the problem. NEVER leave customers hanging!

4 Really get to know your customers. Implement a formal system to track customer interactions. It will help you identify your best customers as well as those who may not have frequented your business in a while. You can also monitor whether a customer is due for training on a product.

There are many software applications designed to track customer engagement, ranging from powerful and expensive products to simple web-based applications that cost less than \$25 a month.

As you gain new customers, log their information and notes into the software. Later, you can sort and analyze this data to uncover useful information.

You don't need a sophisticated or expensive system to track customers. You can simply use a rolodex with handwritten index cards or log details in a Word document. Any type of categorized database allows the entire team to access the customer's history.

5 Manage customer relationships. Utilize your database to identify your best customers and reward them. Consider offering small discounts to customers who purchase regularly, post testimonials, or stay trained and up-to-speed on new products. Troubleshooting and tech support is time consuming. Offering a small discount is a great incentive to encourage customers to continue to develop their skills and knowledge. ■



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