

How loyal are your clients

Everybody wants loyalty- loyal spouses, loyal friends, loyal pets. But it's something you have to work at. Like any good relationship, it's a two-way street. And as a business owner or manager, there are things you can do to make sure your clients remain loyal.



The first step is seeing things from your client's eyes and evaluating their experience. They should be receiving personalized service that has them coming back for more. Not just good service, mind you, but great service, the kind of service that they tell others about – bringing in more clients based on word-of-mouth.

Here are a few more tips to gain their loyalty:

*Ensure you have the right people. An employee who is less than dedicated to serving clients needs to be reassigned, because they may be costing you valuable business. Make sure your employees are meeting your clients' needs.

*Offer a customer service refresher course. Use incentives and employee recognition to help employees focus on the people they should be serving– your clients. Consider in-house training so everyone knows what the expectations are.

*Review your workflow. Make sure you aren't inconveniencing clients because of inefficiencies in-house. Are clients waiting too long before they hear back from someone? What's the total time, start to finish, it takes to complete a client's project?

*Listen to client complaints and concerns. Fix problems fast and bend over backwards to make things right. Clients do you a favor when they offer honest feedback, even if it's not what you want to hear.

Gaining client loyalty isn't expensive. It makes for better business relationships and can help grow your firm. And, happy clients come back, again and again.

This month's tip was adapted from an article by Ray Silverstein, as it appeared on Smart Money's small business Website,

http://www.ssmallbiz.com/bestpractices/4_Steps_for_Gaining_Customer_Loyalty.html

You can't say no.

If you've ever had– or been– a little kid, you were, at one time, very familiar with the word "no." As a tyke, you heard it all day long. As a parent, you said it all day long. And then, all of a sudden, the word left your vocabulary.



So when your boss asked you to work late the night before your vacation, you said, "Yes, of course, I'd love to." And when the neighbors invited

you to that barbecue on a night when you just wanted to put on sweats and read a book, you said, "I'll be there with the coleslaw." The time your employee asked for a day off to shop downtown during the busiest week in your company's history, you smiled and said, "Have fun!"

Later, you cursed yourself for your lack of gumption. Did you misplace your spine somewhere on your cluttered desk or kitchen table? Not necessarily. There were, after all, compelling reasons to become a "yes" man or woman. Your boss was in a bind. Your neighbors are some of your closest friends. Your employee had been working double time to meet company demands.

But sometimes, it's OK to say no. Say it out loud, right now. Go ahead, give it a shout! And if it seems a little harsh, as sometimes it can, just drop that awful two-letter word and do what you can to soften the blow.

I'm so sorry, but my flight leaves at 6 a.m. and I have to leave for the airport at 4 a.m.; I can stay for an hour though. The cookout sounds like lots of fun but it's been a long week and I just need a night off; maybe next weekend. That shopping trip would be a great break for you and I know you need it, but we're all hands on deck right now; perhaps you can take Monday off and have a long weekend.

That wasn't so hard, was it? Well, no.

Do You Want Quality Customer Relationships?

The Success Trek team is ready to talk! Sit down with us and we will listen to your issues and challenges. For more information, contact Theresa Valade at t.valade@success-trek.com or 219-680-7720.

Information on Free HR Webinars

Success Trek partner, Preventive HR, offers a free Webinar. The title for October is "Create and Maintain Employee Personnel Files".

To receive notification of the date and registration, go to www.hr Sentry.com and provide your email address. This will also get you on the list for future free webinars. These webinars are provided by HR Sentry which Preventive HR offers through an alliance.

Preventive HR is dedicated to providing its clients with tools and resources to help them efficiently and effectively manage their organizations. Preventive HR has teamed with HR Made Simple to create a free webinar series that will address various Human Resource topics.