



CUSTOMER DELIGHT PLAYBOOK:

**DELIGHTING YOUR CUSTOMERS
EVERY. SINGLE. DAY.**

BY SUJAN PATEL

CONSUMERS ARE LESS LOYAL THAN THEY USED TO BE

There are many reasons why this is. Confession time: I don't know them all. What I do know is that increased choice and access to information have a lot to say for themselves.



Let's travel back 15 years or so...

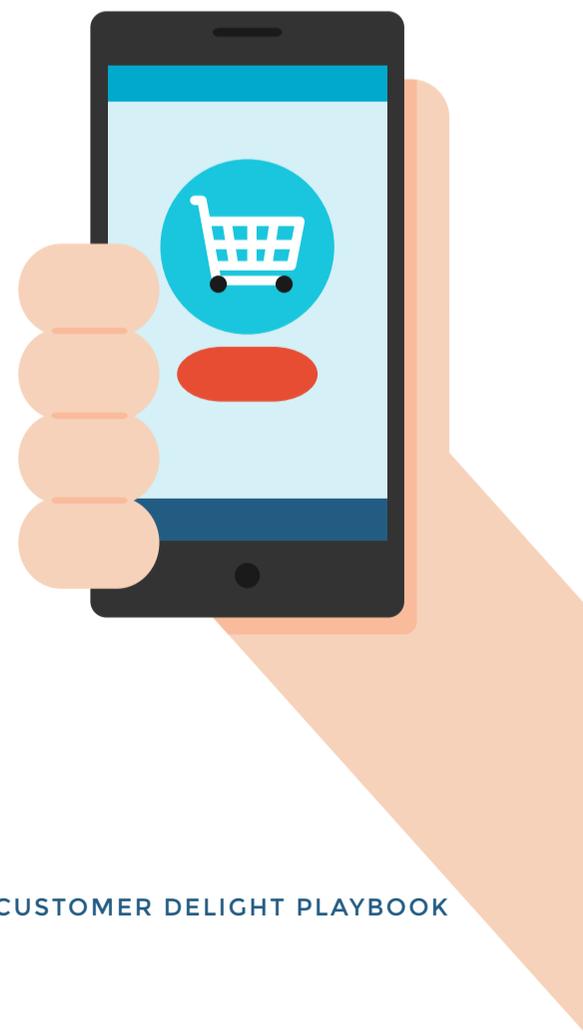
Can you remember how we shopped before “internet shopping” really took off? Before Amazon ruled the web (and the world)? We'd visit an actual shop, and (within reason) we would pay the price they asked for whatever we wanted to buy.

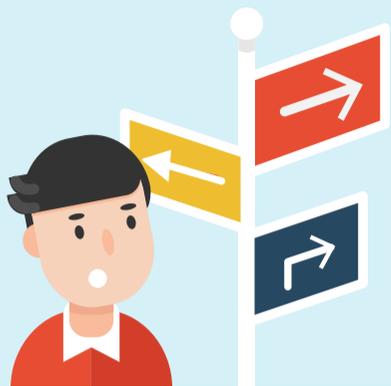
“Shopping around” happened, but not much. It wasn't worth it to save a dollar or two (especially when the cost of traveling between stores was factored in). If there were multiple stores close to us selling similar products, loyalty would generally determine where we'd head.

But online...

Online it's so easy to let price drive purchasing decisions. Just look at Google shopping. We can enter the name of the product we want to buy and compare price and shipping costs from a whole range of retailers - all without even visiting their websites.

Life isn't much easier for B2B companies, either. The web allows us to read reviews, ask questions on forums, and even research the financial health of a company we're interested in working with. In client-facing industries, the internet makes it easier to work with companies outside of our immediate area.





This means many, many more options.

That might sound like bad news (for the company at least), but it's not. Not really, anyway.

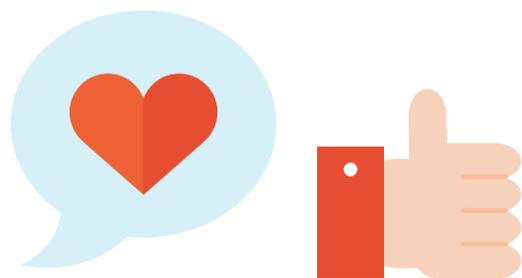
You can still win customer loyalty – you'll just need to work a little harder for it.

“A once-loyal customer base can easily disappear within twelve months – just look at how many of Nokia's loyal customers jumped ship to Apple or Samsung without a second thought. On the other hand, many consumers are willing to attach themselves to certain brands as long as they have an emotional attachment. Research has revealed that consumers are prepared to commit to up to five brands as long as they believe the brand adds value to their lives or society in general. In other words, a certain brand paradox exists in the world today where people will wholeheartedly buy into specific brands, while putting less trust in brands in general at the same time.”

– Steven Van Belleghem, MYcustomer

In short, you need to delight your customers.

But what does that actually mean?



“Providing a remarkable experience to users that focuses on their needs, interests, and wishes that leaves them so satisfied, they can't help but go out and sing the praises of your brand.”

– Rachel Goodman Moore, Moz Academy, writing for HubSpot

GREAT SERVICE = DELIGHT

THIS E-BOOK IS SPLIT INTO THREE DISTINCT SECTIONS:

- 1 The Fundamentals of Customer Delight 07**
 - Designing a website with customers in mind
 - Underpromising and overdelivering
 - Seamless customer support
 - First contact resolution
 - Building relationships
 - Employing the right people

- 2 The Surprise 31**
 - Big brand case studies
 - The little gestures
 - Delighting your ex-customers

- 3 Customer Appreciation 31**
 - Customer advocacy
 - Referral programs

In 2010, the Harvard Business Review published an article titled “Stop Trying to Delight Your Customers.”

In the article, we’re told that “**Delighting customers doesn’t build loyalty; reducing their effort – the work they must do to get their problem solved – does.**” And, “**Exceeding their expectations during service interactions (for example, by offering a refund, a free product, or a free service such as expedited shipping) makes customers only marginally more loyal than simply meeting their needs.**”

But isn’t “reducing effort” a way of delighting customers?

And if by way of a small gesture we can make a customer “marginally more loyal,” should we not at least try?

Let’s look at some examples that illustrate how other entrepreneurs are “delighting” their customers and how effective that can be.



Femtrepreneur **Maria Coz** includes a handwritten thank-you note with each order from her vintage shop business. She says, “I get emails back from customers telling me how nice these notes are, and it leads to a lot of positive reviews.”



Growth-platform expert **Megan Minns** says, “I like to send special welcome packages and even a surprise personalized item in the middle of our project. I think wrapping up a project is such an exciting time, so I love sending clients a little goodbye package as well, just to show my appreciation for working with them.”



Real estate agent **Naomi Hattaway** provides kids with a “Let’s go look for houses” goodie bag to keep them occupied while their parents are looking around homes.

It’s evident that there are countless creative ways companies could be delighting their customers, but as highlighted by HBR, there’s more to delighting your customers than grand gestures.

Ready to get started?

Chapter 1

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF CUSTOMER DELIGHT



On their own, the following strategies are unlikely to result in “delight,” but does that make them any less important?

Not at all.

If you can't get these bits right, you'll struggle to delight your customers - period.

DESIGN YOUR WEBSITE WITH YOUR CUSTOMER IN MIND

This should be obvious, but it's amazing how many websites I see that are:

- ✘ Tricky to navigate
- ✘ Feature jargon-heavy copy
- ✘ Lack the information visitors need

Some even manage all three. Thankfully, though...

It's easy to avoid falling into the same trap - you just need to spot that trap before you trip.

Why Bad Websites Happen



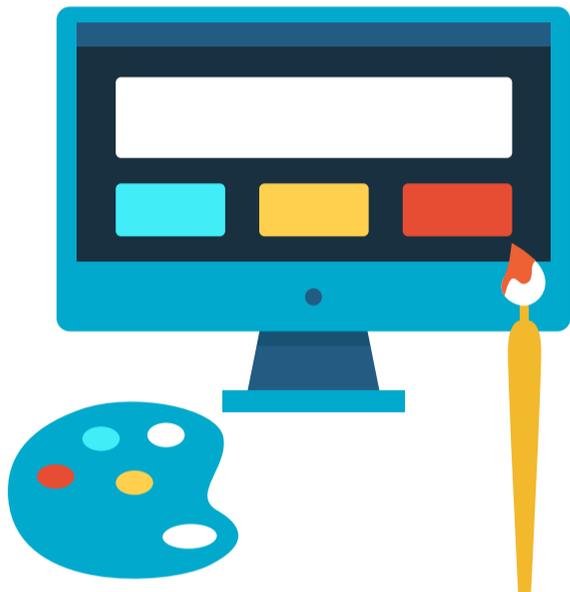
This should be obvious, but it's amazing how many websites I see that are:

Companies look at their websites from their own point of view - not from the point of view of their visitors.

We (presumably) know our industry and products inside-out. Chances are we've been involved in the design and development of our sites from the word "go."

This makes it surprisingly easy to overlook how someone without our same knowledge and experience might see things.

Design and Navigation



If your website is going to help you get customers on the road to delight, not frustration, it needs to be intuitive. By that I mean the second someone lands on your site, they should know exactly what to do and where to go to find what they're after.

For this, your [site architecture](#) is the key

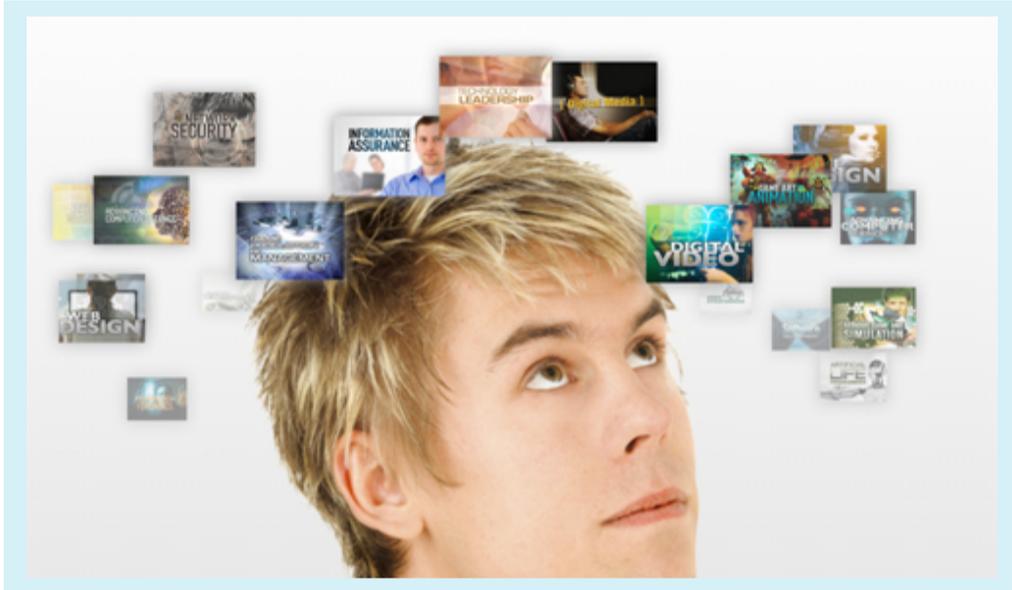
The architecture of your site is essentially the way it's organized and how each page links together. The ideal architecture is logically and (here's that word again) intuitively structured. Pages should be quick and easy to find, using the least possible number of clicks.

For small sites, that's relatively simple. The bigger the site, the more difficult maintaining a logical architecture becomes. Problems tend to get more apparent as sites expand. Webmasters will often add new pages on, instead of taking the time to determine where they will sit best.

It should also be crystal clear upon landing on a page what options the visitor has and where they need to go next.

If in doubt: less is more

Take the [University of Advancing Technology's website](#) Central to the homepage is a fast-rotating menu of options.



Yep, you read that right. Those pictures above are all links to different categories on the site, and they rotate (quickly) around that (rightly) bemused-looking man's head.

One site that might be even worse is luxury brand [Hermès' website](#).

Its homepage boasts a disjointed clump of menu options, most of which send users to a segregated subdomain.

Best of all, the cursor, which highlights sections of the page as you move, feels clunky and distracting.



Before designing your own site architecture, analyze and learn from successful and intuitive sites in your industry.

Further reading:

[How to Design the Structure of a Website with Sitemapping in Eight Steps](#)

Jargon

When writing copy, assume your visitors and potential customers know nothing about your industry.

Sure, some visitors to your site might understand you perfectly, but if anyone's forced to fire up a dictionary just to get their head around your copy, it's too complicated.

[There is a time and a place for jargon](#) - landing page copy is not it.

If your visitors can't understand what you're saying, they're unlikely to become customers - let alone delighted ones.



Further reading:

[Avoid Jargon in Copywriting and Earn More: A Case Study](#)

Product Information

Does your site give users all the information they need to make an informed purchasing decision that they feel confident about?

If you're selling software, does your site lead by explaining how your offering solves customers' problems?

When this gets overlooked (and it often does), it's either because:

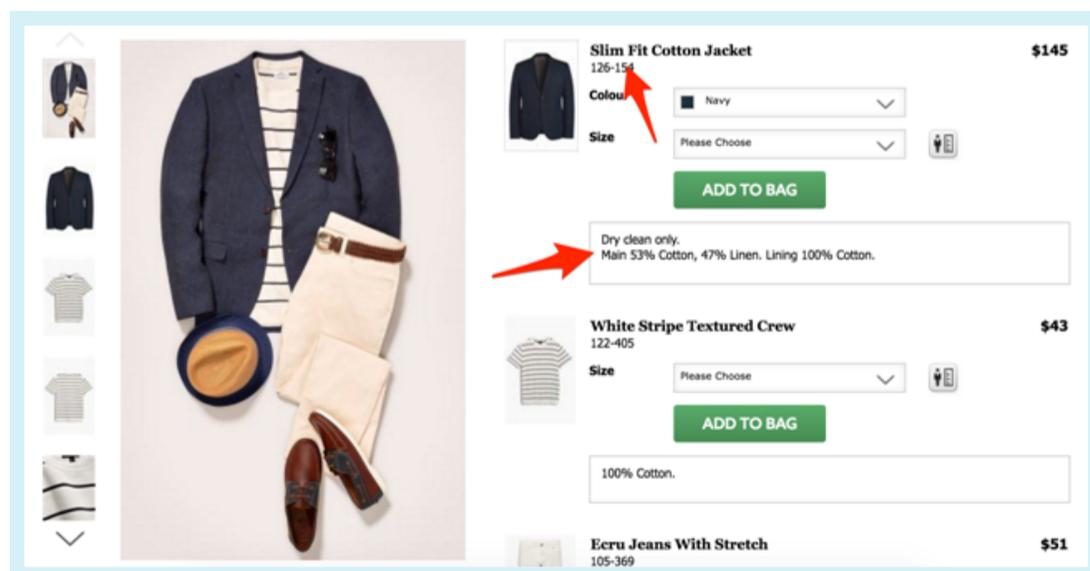
- 1 Site owners forget that the details they know about their products aren't obvious to their customers, or
- 2 They just don't realize how important product information is to their customers.

In site design and architecture, less is usually more.

When you're describing products to customers, the opposite is true.

Take [Next](#).

The site's product information is minimal. The only information visitors are offered about the jacket below is the fit, color, material, and the fact that it's dry clean only.



[Product details for shirts](#) are worse. [Shoes](#), worse still.

Compare this with Topman, which, for [jackets at least](#), includes key information such as how many pockets and buttons they have and whether they're single or double-breasted.

Product Info

- Skinny fit
- Notch lapel
- Single breasted
- Two button fastening
- Two front flap pockets and one breast pocket
- Model is 6 foot 1 (1.85m) and wears a 40
- 55% Cotton, 44% Polyester, 1% Elastane
- Dry clean only
- Colour: Brown
- Code: 88A55MBRN

If you're not convinced, think of like this:

In a store, a customer can pick up and feel an item. They can try clothes on. They can look at labels and assess a product's quality.



They can't do any of this online. All they have is the information you give them - so make this information as detailed and helpful as possible. Include full product specifications, quality images that allow customers to view items from all angles and that can be expanded or zoomed in on, and if possible, videos.

You won't be able to delight your customers, whatever you do, if the product your customers receive differs from their expectations.

Similar rules apply to SaaS companies. Hook visitors in by leading with the most important information - how your product solves a pain point.

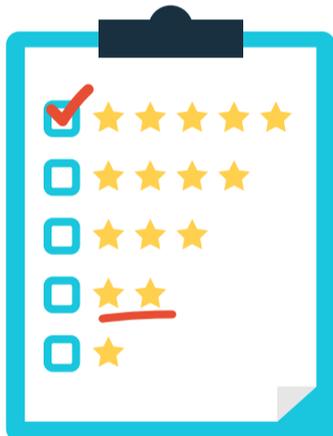
Content Marketer helps you find and contact influencers via email and twitter. With our proven email templates your outreach is guaranteed to be more successful.

[WHY DID WE BUILD THIS? >](#)

Increase your blog **TRAFFIC BY 3X** by simply reaching out to people, tools, or companies you mentioned in your content/blog post.

Then, elaborate on the product's features and benefits. On contentmarketer.io we do this using testimonials and by talking visitors through how the product works.

UNDERPROMISE AND OVERDELIVER



This phrase is so overused, it's cliché. So much so that some people are openly against underpromising and overdelivering.

Jessica Stillman covered a study in Inc. which concluded that “if you're overdelivering with your customers, you're probably wasting effort.”

Writing on LinkedIn Pulse, Rena Ling said, “When you underpromise, you are actually withholding the best of what you can potentially offer. In fact, you are deliberately under-selling your capabilities, so that when you finally do deliver on that promise, it looks like you have overdelivered.”

“It's like telling a client, ‘The best I can commit to you is 80% of my effort. When I eventually deliver 100% of what you have asked for, I am seen as “overdelivering” on my promise. In my opinion, that's just being dishonest.’”

I don't agree.

Unless you can without a doubt guarantee that you will meet your customer's expectations, you should always underpromise. That's not lying. If anything you're being more honest - you're accepting that you're not perfect. All you're doing is leaving a margin for error. It also allows you to exceed expectations, which is a great way to delight customers.

Don't believe it matters?

Ever had a surprise upgrade at a hotel or know someone who has? Chances are they, or you, felt pretty great about it. Okay, so the hotel didn't underpromise and overdeliver - it's unlikely they decided you would get an upgrade when you booked. What they did do was exceed your expectations, but the principle is the same - you got more than you were promised.

Restaurants are known to underpromise and overdeliver, too.



Does this sound familiar?

You go into a restaurant and are told it's a 45-minute wait for a table. 20 minutes later you're seated, menu in hand.

You, and your belly, are pleased.

This is a super-common example of underpromising and overdelivering that restaurants exploit to manage expectations. It's much better to give the customer a "worst-case scenario" and seat them faster than expected, than to tell the customer you hope to seat them in 20 minutes, and it actually takes an hour.

The first scenario delights the customer when their expectations are exceeded. Okay, so the underpromise was technically a lie, but it's the second scenario that would make the customer feel lied to - even if the restaurant honestly expected to seat them in 20 minutes.

OFFER SEAMLESS CUSTOMER SUPPORT

When call centers came along, customer service was revolutionized. We're now in the midst of another revolution – the multichannel customer service revolution.

Today's customers are using an average of [4 different channels to communicate with companies](#).



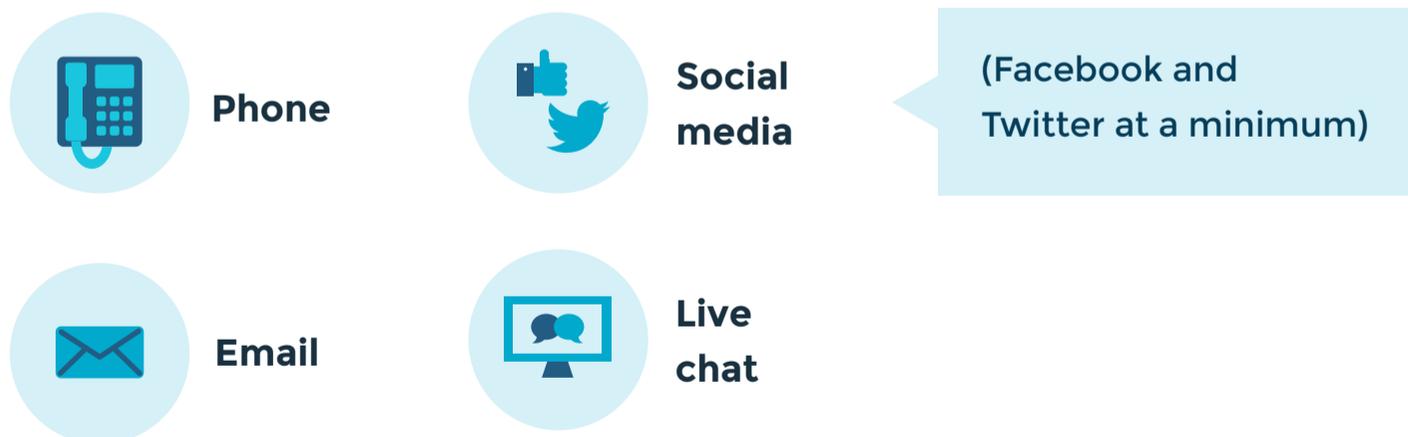
Today's customers want choice: the choice to use the best method of support depending on the problem, their current situation, and their personal preferences.

Your customer might hate talking on the phone or be unable to make a phone call. They might also want a quick response (which rules out email). Another customer might have a problem that's difficult to explain. Email might allow them to explain themselves clearly.

But...

Not only do today's customers want choice, they expect it.

To meet your customer's expectations, make yourself as available as possible. This means offering support via:



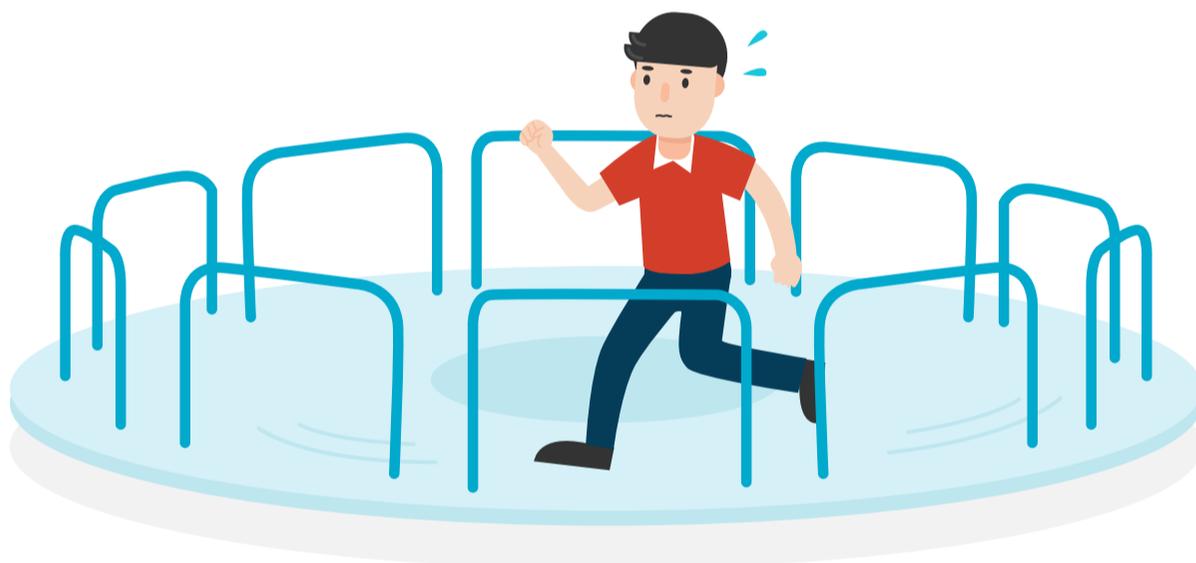
But how do you go above and beyond in meeting your customer's expectations? How do you get them on the road to delight?

By offering a seamless, integrated system of customer support.

While most companies today offer multiple channels of support, far fewer offer omnichannel support. Most of us will be able to empathize with the following situation:

You have a problem [with a company]. You contact them about it, but the issue isn't resolved right away. At your next point of contact, the representative tasked with helping you knows nothing about your previous communications with the company.

You have to explain everything again.



As a customer, there are few things more frustrating than going around in circles trying to get a company to solve a problem they are (probably) responsible for.

It (understandably) makes you feel annoyed and undervalued. But what if every time you contacted a company, they knew everything you had previously discussed with them? They knew what devices you use, that you'd been having problems logging into their site, or that you'd just received a replacement product. What if, at the start of the phone call, the agent greeted you and asked if you were calling to follow up on the query you raised yesterday? If you then continued yesterday's conversation, instead of starting again?

Would that not “delight” you as a customer? Would dealing with a proactive, forward-thinking company that pays attention to their customers not boost the odds of you becoming a repeat customer? This experience is still so uncommon that it’s an easy and really effective way to move your customers towards “delight.”

It’s also surprisingly easy to implement – you’ll just need integrated, cloud-based customer service software. Try [Zendesk](#) or [Groove](#).

AIM FOR FIRST CONTACT RESOLUTION

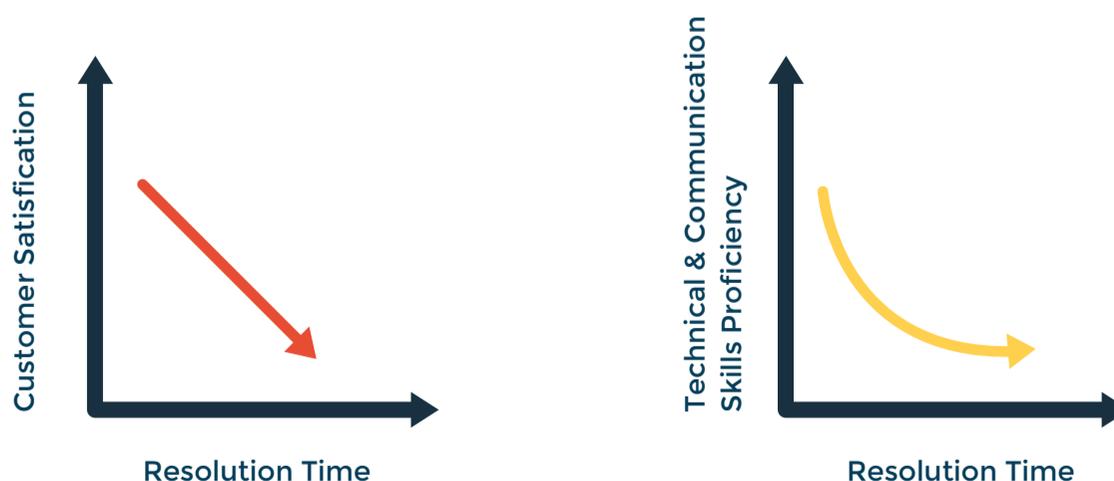
When a customer contacts you with a problem, how easily does it get resolved?

Does the customer have to contact you multiple times? Are they having to chase you, or are you proactive in following up on communications? Are problems usually resolved on the same day, or do issues drag out over several days – or longer?



If you’re not resolving most problems at first contact, you’re not delivering the service you should be, and you’re probably not delighting your customers.

Customers don’t want to make contact repeatedly in order to solve what is often a generic problem – and they certainly don’t want to chase you in order to do it.



If you want to be able to delight your customers, you need to implement systems that ensure queries get answered, are dealt with, and where necessary, resolved – as quickly as possible. You need to aim for first contact resolution (or FCR for short).

So how can you do this?

Ask Customers If Their Problem Has Been Resolved

One of the easiest ways to improve your rate of FCR is to ask the customer if their problem has been resolved. You should be certain that the customer has no more questions and that they are happy with the outcome of their query.

The reasoning behind this is simple: if you don't ask, you don't get. If a customer is unsure or confused, but isn't given the chance to raise their concerns, there's a good chance they will stay quiet.



And after that?

They will probably call back. That means more time spent resolving a problem that should already be water under the bridge. Meanwhile, you have an unhappy customer who could have been on their way to “delight” instead.

Don't mark a query as resolved until you have definite clarification from the customer that they are happy and have no other questions.

Ensure Your Staff Has the Authority & Tools to Help Customers



Your customer service staff should not just be answering calls, taking notes, and passing queries on to someone higher up.

Do you feel the need to micromanage your staff and the service and solutions being provided to your customers?



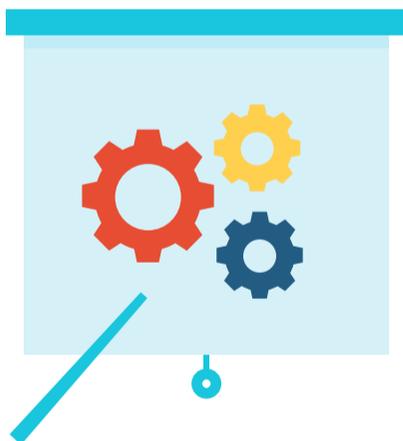
If so, stop.

Instead, assess how much time and resources your need for control is wasting. Think about how it affects staff morale. And most importantly, consider how it affects your customers.

Give your staff the power, authority, and tools to solve customer's problems without your input.

If you can't trust your staff to resolve problems without you looking over their shoulder, it's probably time to reassess your hiring policy ([see below, "Employ the right people"](#)).

Invest in Staff Training



Training shouldn't just take place in the first week of a new hire's career with you. It should be a recurring event that serves to continuously enhance your staff's knowledge and improve skills.

At a minimum, aim to provide staff with an hour or two of training a month. Look at the individual strengths and weaknesses of each agent and use case studies from the previous month to identify areas that staff can improve upon.

Further reading:

[The Best Ways to Improve First Contact Resolution](#)

[The Ultimate Guide to Customer Service Training](#)

BUILD RELATIONSHIP

Take the time to build great relationships with your customers and you will be rewarded with loyalty.

Even when customers say **they don't want relationships with brands**, most customers actually do. What they don't want is a certain type of relationship with you.

They don't want you to act like a family member or friend. They want you to act like a brand that cares about their needs.

The fact is, you can't avoid having a relationship with your customers, and they can't avoid having a relationship with you. What you need to do is turn that relationship from a fleeting one into one that lasts.

There is no more
B2B or C2C.
It's H2H:
Human-to-Human



What a Great Customer/Brand Relationship Looks Like

In a great customer/brand relationship, the brand is honest and transparent, and goes above and beyond to offer each customer a truly personalized experience. Think about how you would go the extra mile for the people you care about. You should treat each of your customers in the same way.

Talk to your customers like you would talk to your mother or father-in-law. Be friendly, helpful, and personable. Take control of the conversation and ask questions that will help you get to know them. Most importantly, be polite and keep the language you use clean.

Sure, you should be friendly, but you need to err on the side of caution and avoid saying anything that could possibly offend.

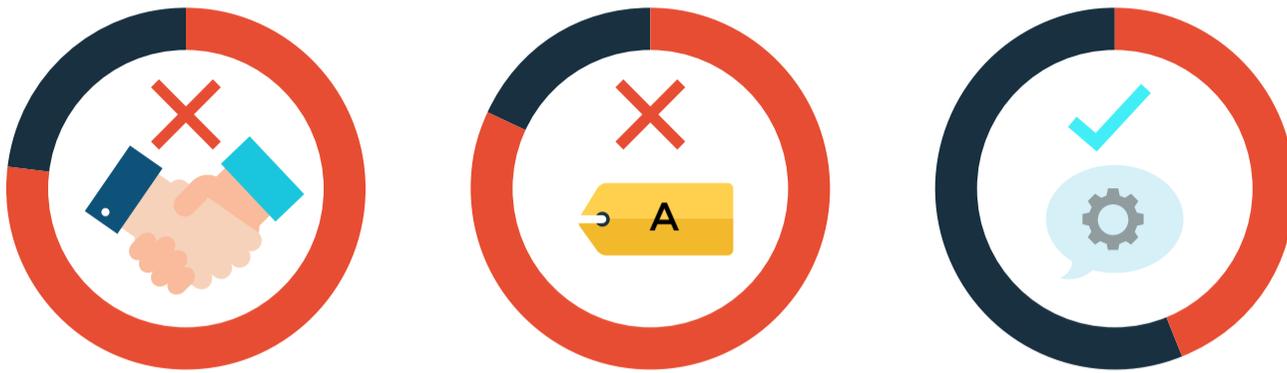
Of course, a relationship is a two-way thing.

Treat a customer well, and in return, that customer may well become a brand advocate. They might not realize this has happened, but chances are their behavior will start to benefit you as they come back and begin to recommend you to others.

This bit is even more important for client-facing companies.

Clients who have a close relationship with the companies they work with tend to stick around longer. I can't find any stats to back this up, but my own experience shows this to be the case, pretty much every time.

Again, some clients might say that they don't want relationships with the companies that work for them - they might say they want you to get on with the work and leave them to get on with theirs - but subconsciously, they will be drawn to those who take the time to get to know them over those who don't.



77% of customers say they don't want relationships with brands, but **82%** of customers have left a brand because of a bad customer service experience and **44%** want companies to be more open about their processes and practices.

The fact is, they want a relationship that benefits them. They want the rewards of a relationship, without the work.

How to Build Relationships with Customers

Communicate

What happens when a new customer comes on board? Do they receive a personalized welcome email?

When customers talk to or about you on social media, do you respond?

If a customer asks you a question, do you answer it, then forget about it? Or do you invite the customer to ask further questions?

No relationship can succeed without effective communication. Take every appropriate opportunity to communicate with your customers, and make sure to personalize your side of the conversation. Don't answer as "the company" - let the customer know who they're actually talking to.



I'd also recommend companies take steps to encourage open communication by inviting customers into communities like Facebook groups, or by providing them a forum to use on your site.

This will give you the tools needed to turn support tickets into valuable, ongoing conversations.

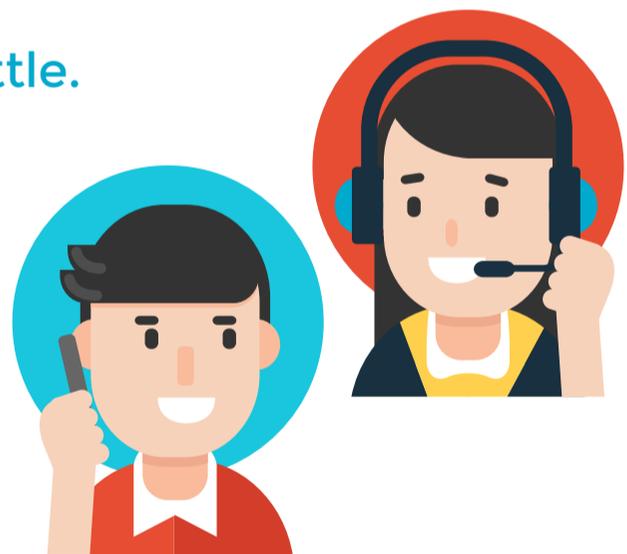
Let Customers See Familiar Faces

Customers will create stronger ties with you if they keep seeing the same names and faces. The reason why is simple: we build bonds with people more easily than we build bonds with brands. We also build stronger bonds over time.

If you're in a B2B, client-facing company, this one's easy – give each client a dedicated account manager.

In B2C things get a little trickier. But only a little.

You can't give each customer their own account manager or service representative. What you can do is take steps to humanize your customer service representatives and implement procedures that will ensure the same reps deal with the same customers wherever possible.



- 1 Include your customer service reps on team pages of your websites (along with a photo and a few facts about them).
- 2 Ensure that when communicating through company social profiles, they always sign off with their name.
- 3 Have them reply to emails from their own (company) email account.

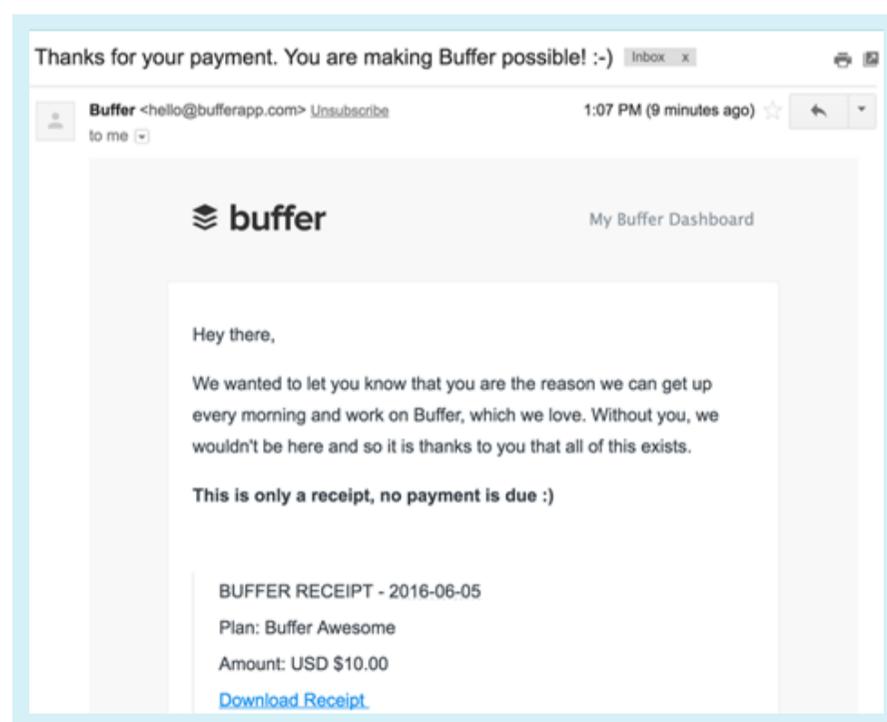
- 4 Integrate your customer service channels so the same reps deal with inquiries across all channels. Avoid having separate teams managing the phones, social media, and so on.
- 5 When a rep first speaks to a customer about a particular query, ensure they see it through personally until it's resolved.

Update Customers Regularly

Use tools like email marketing and social media to keep your customers in the loop as to what's going on in your company. Humanize your company. Don't just talk about your latest sale or investment. Talk about things like:

- New hires
- Fun happenings in the office
- Company events (think Christmas parties)

Buffer is an excellent example of a company that uses updates to engage its customers – its monthly invoices make a point of thanking them.



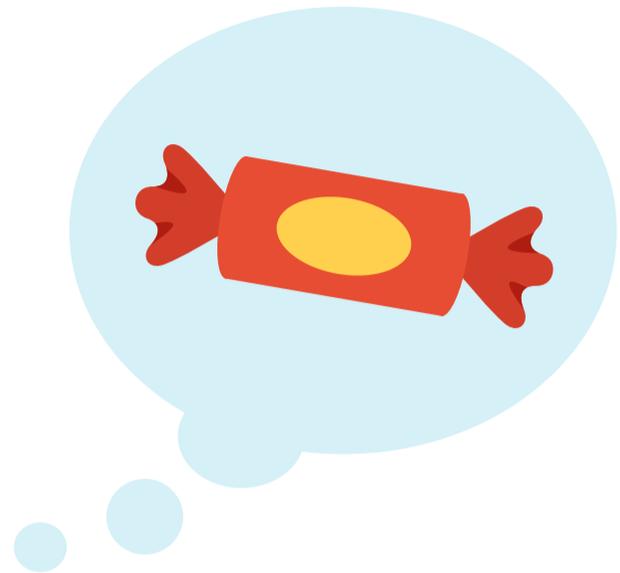
Go Above and Beyond Call of Duty

Don't just solve your customer's initial query - dig to find out what else you might be able to help with.

Maybe they called up about a problem using a feature of your product, but they're actually unsure about the benefits of another feature, and have avoided using it. This is the sort of information we often find out only if we ask the right questions.

Stay on high alert for other information that could enable you to act in a manner that surprises and delights your customers. When I was at **When I Work**, for example, a customer mentioned how they had never tried a particular brand of candy because it wasn't available where they lived (in London), so we sent it to them.

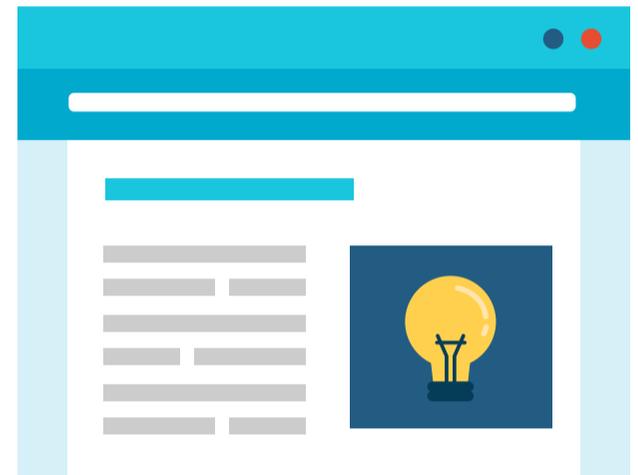
This was bound to be a nice surprise but it was more than that - it showed that we listened and that we cared.



Leverage Content Marketing

Use your blog to educate and delight your customers. Create content that helps them get the most out of your products, but that also helps them in other, related areas, too.

For example, let's say you offer a tool that helps customers manage their personal finances. It would be natural for your content to educate customers on various ways to manage their money, but you might branch out to content that educates customers on how to make more money, or how to manage tricky areas of their life in general.



How to Turn Customers into Brand Advocates

Each technique mentioned above can help in the fight to turn customers into brand advocates, but there's so much more you can do to take your customers from happy, repeat customers, to customers that love and advocate your brand.



Offer Loyalty Program

Provide customers with incentives in exchange for their repeat business. You could award customers points each time they spend with you, that are redeemable for rewards or money off future purchases.

Alternatively, consider a program like Amazon Prime, whereby the customer pays to access special privileges.



Give Away Free, Branded Merchandise

Freebies make a nice surprise for customers, but the fact it's branded helps build your customers' affiliation with your brand and promotes it to potential new customers, too.

Read about [how I used T-shirt marketing to generate \\$980k in revenue here.](#)



Ask for Feedback

It helps you identify areas for improvement and reinforces the fact that you actually do give a damn.



Remember (and Use) Their Name

This is such a simple practice that it should be a given, yet it's so often overlooked. In short: we like to hear our name. When companies we work with use it, it makes us feel special and helps us warm to the brand (even though we might not realize it).



Remember Special Occasions

And celebrate them. A card in the mail on a customer's birthday goes a long way. Bonus points if it's handwritten.



Be Honest with Your Customers

When something goes wrong, don't try and hide it. Be upfront about your failings – just be sure to explain how you're going to put things right. Your customers will trust and respect you more as a result.

EMPLOY THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Every employee should be important to your business (if they're not important, you need to ask yourself why they're there).

Your **most** important employees however, are the ones who come into contact with customers.



Want to know why?

Because it takes just one experience with an unmotivated, uncaring, and unprofessional staff member for you to lose a customer's trust, and potentially, that customer.

On the other hand, happy, motivated, and service-orientated staff can play a key role in ensuring your company delights customers every day.

In short: [employ people who genuinely care](#) – people who care about your company and its goals, and people who also care about pleasing other people.

When recruiting staff to work in customer care, look for attributes like:

- 1 Listening and communication skills – You want people who can shut up and listen when needed and that instinctually know what to say and when.
- 2 The ability to think on their feet – Ask the candidate some unexpected questions to test their communication reflexes.

- 3 A natural ability to build rapport – When they walk in the room, do you instantly warm to them? Do you like them even more when they start talking? Those are great signs that the person is a good fit for a customer service role.
- 4 Are they empathetic? Can they put themselves in other people’s shoes and understand their problems and feelings?
- 5 Resilience – Can they take things on the chin? While sensitivity helps people empathize, those that are overly-sensitive may not be suited to handling the pressure of an angry or upset customer.

Further reading:

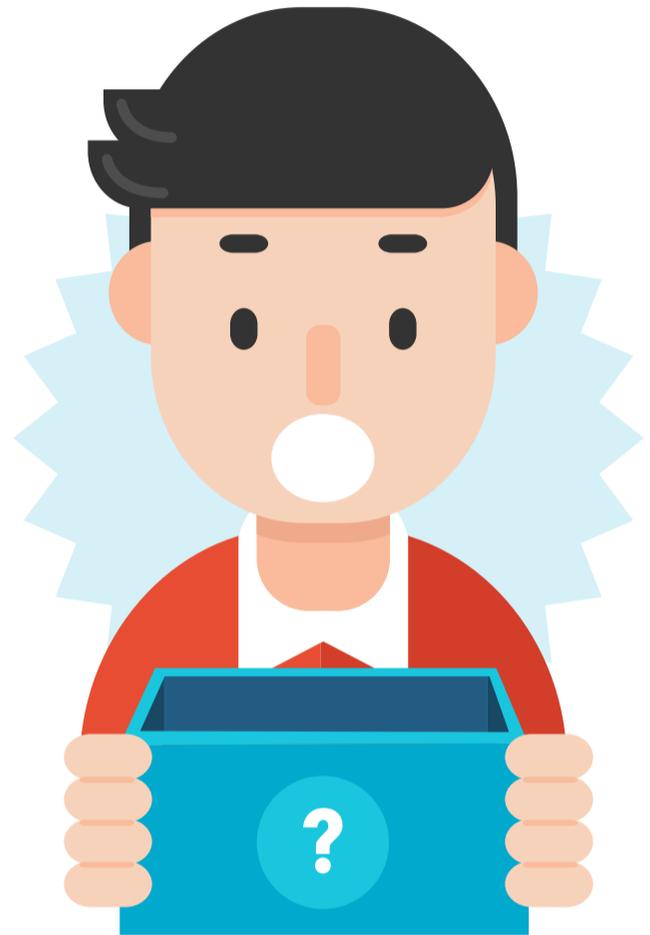
[The Customer Service Interview Questions You Need To Be Asking \(But Probably Aren't\)](#)

Chapter 2

THE SURPRISE

So far we've looked at six key ingredients in creating a company that's set up to delight customers everyday.

Without these, any efforts you make to surprise and delight your customers are likely to go to waste. At the very least, the "delight" will be short-lived. The fact is, you can't truly delight your customers if you're not already meeting, or, ideally, exceeding their expectations day-to-day.



Have you heard about the study which found waiters who left mints for customers received a 21% better tip than those who left nothing? This shows that even a small surprise gesture or gift can delight customers.

But let's think about something for a minute...

What do you think would have happened if those mints followed crap service? Would the customers have been so generous with their tips? What do you think the customers are going to remember most about their meal? The mints, that lasted a minute or two? Or the crap service, that lasted the whole meal? Whatever you do, a gift or generous gesture is no substitute for poor customer service. Basically, if you're using a gift or big gesture to make up for bad customer care, you're doing it wrong.

It's like showering a partner with presents to say 'sorry' – it might make them happy in the short term, but it doesn't get to the root of the problem. If a relationship's on the rocks, all the flowers, chocolates, and giant teddy bears in the world aren't going to save it. On the other hand, if a relationship is already good, a surprise can be the icing on the cake that makes a happy partner (or customer) truly delighted. It comes back to the [Harvard Business Review article I quoted earlier](#): what customers want most is great service that helps to solve their problems quickly and easily.

Basically, they want you to do what you're supposed to do.

Customers don't base their loyalties with companies on their "over-the-top customer service," but if you can make an already-happy customer happier with a surprise gesture or gift, you may well extend that customer's loyalties and make them feel even more love for your brand.

Let's See Some Case Studies



In 2011, Peter Shankman was boarding a flight from Tampa, Florida, back to Newark where he had flown from earlier that same day. Tired and hungry, he tweeted **Morton's Steakhouse:**



Hey @Mortons - can you meet me at newark airport with a porterhouse when I land in two hours? K, thanks. :)

Despite the tweet being quite clearly tongue-in-cheek:

“Let's understand: I was joking. I had absolutely no expectations of anything from that tweet. It's like how we tweet "Dear Winter, please stop, love Peter," or something similar.”

Morton's actually met Shankman at Newark airport with a 24 oz. porterhouse (as well an order of Colossal Shrimp, a side of potatoes, bread, and the necessary paraphernalia to eat it with).



Sure, Shankman has a huge Twitter following – it's doubtful Morton's would have done the same for Joe Blog with 1,000 followers – but this story is still a great example of the impact going the extra mile can have (after all, I'm talking about this 5 years after it happened).

You just need to:

- 1 Keep on top of what your followers are saying about you, and
- 2 Have the guts to capitalize on opportunities

As Shankman wrote:

“Think about all the things that could have gone wrong: My flight could have been delayed or diverted. I could have exited out a different location. (Had I taken the AirTrain and not had a driver, I never would have even exited that way!) I could have just missed him altogether, I could have landed early, etc., etc... I have no doubt that countless companies think like that. They think along the lines of "Oh, too many logistics. That'll never work," and they leave it at that.

But what if it does work? What if it happens, and it works perfectly, and it shocks the living hell out of the person they do it to? Like it did tonight? And what if that person's first thought is to make it public? Like I did tonight? We live in a world where everyone you meet is a broadcaster. Look around. Think of all your friends, all your colleagues. Do you know anyone anymore who doesn't have a camera in their phone, or anyone who doesn't have a Facebook or Twitter account?



The comments section on [Peter's write-up](#) includes more examples of how surprising your customers can delight them (and get them talking about how great you are) – including some more stories that prove Morton's airport stunt was far from a one-hit wonder:

“I have eaten at Morton's a few times. I always thought the experience was great. But what made me like them was something very simple. Our first time there was for my dad's 80th birthday. They had personalized menus with a happy birthday greeting and my dad's name on them. They also took a picture of us at the table and presented it to us at the end of the night signed by the staff.”

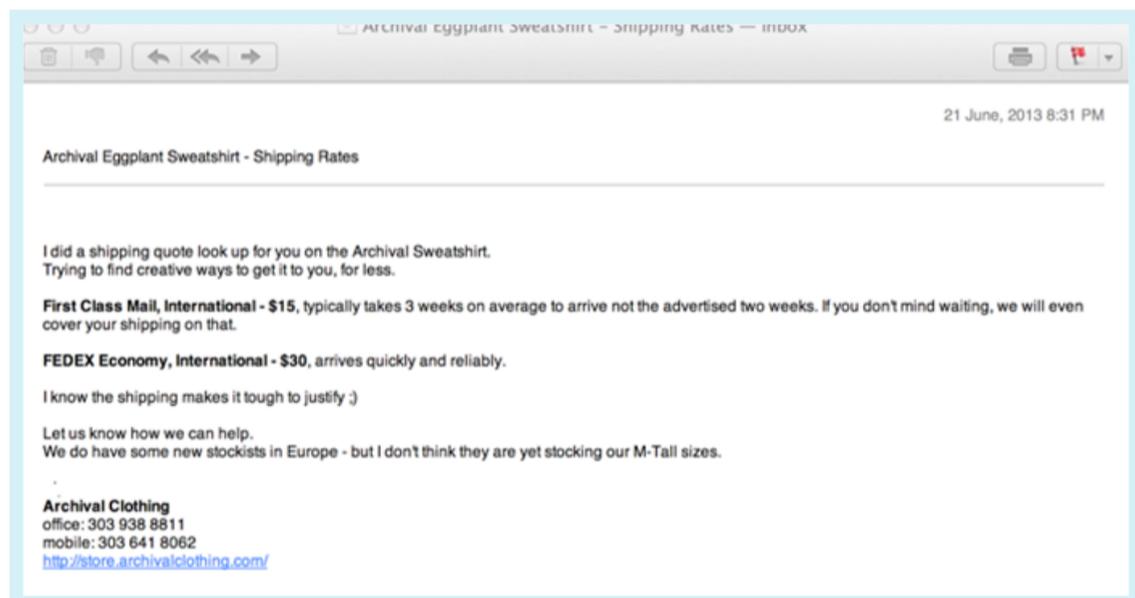
“I had a somewhat similar experience from Morton's about 12 years ago in Dallas. I was working overnight in a building that had Morton's on the first floor. It was rare for me to work overnight, but there was some work that had to be done. Around 9:00 PM, I started feeling hungry and nothing was really open, and I couldn't leave the office or I would be locked out since I didn't have a key. So I called Morton's and asked if they would deliver to someone in the building. They said they would, and all I did was order a baked potato. That was it. They brought up a huge steak (I can't recall the cut now, but it was huge!), my baked potato, a shrimp appetizer, and a slice of chocolate cake. They gave this to me at no charge. They told me it was because I was in the building and sounded hungry when I called! I was floored, completely. Morton's is awesome!”

And a tale which proves companies don't just go "above and beyond" for customers with big followings:

“ I tweeted Nordstrom once with a shipping issue (including the security tag left on my new coat) and the store sent an employee *to my home* to remove the tag. I have 46 followers. ”

Archival

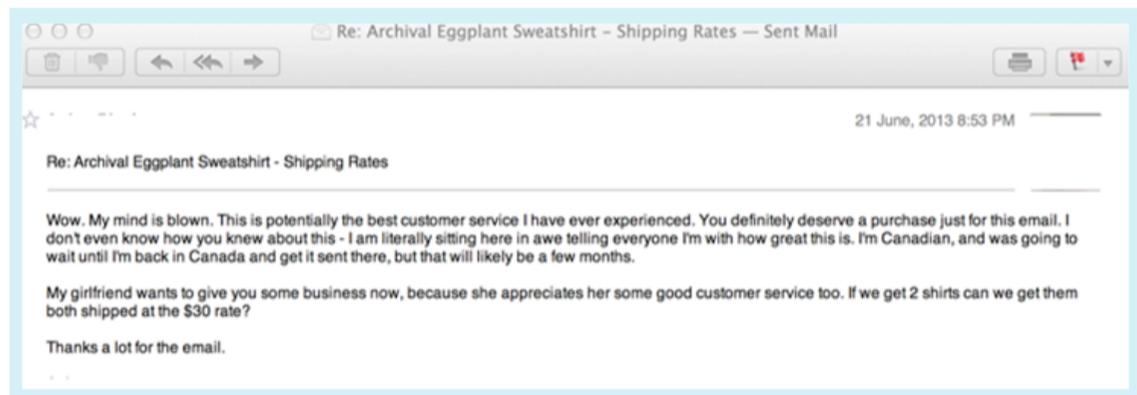
Clothing manufacturer and retailer **Archival** went above and beyond for a visitor to its site who wasn't even a customer – and probably wouldn't have become one if it wasn't for this email:



The customer in question had been browsing the site and added a few items to their cart, but had abandoned it on account of the excessive shipping costs to the UK. Out of the blue, Archival emailed him after researching alternative shipping options that would get the items to the customer for less.

The research carried out by the agent is impressive enough, but the fact this all occurred without the customer initiating anything is pretty mind-blowing.

The customer was so amazed by the service that they wrote about it on Reddit. And yes, they did complete the order (stating that it was “potentially the best customer service they had ever received” and they “deserve a purchase just for this email”).



Anyone who has children, or spends much time around them, will know that they can get very attached to objects like blankets and stuffed toys. Consequently, they can become very distressed if their “comforter” goes missing – something FountainHead CEO Chris Hurn discovered first-hand when his son left his stuffed Giraffe “Joshie” behind on holiday in Florida.



Meet Joshie

On the first night back home, Chris' son was distraught at the thought of going to sleep without Joshie, so Chris did what any parent probably would. He lied.

“Joshie is fine. He's just taking an extra-long vacation at the resort.”

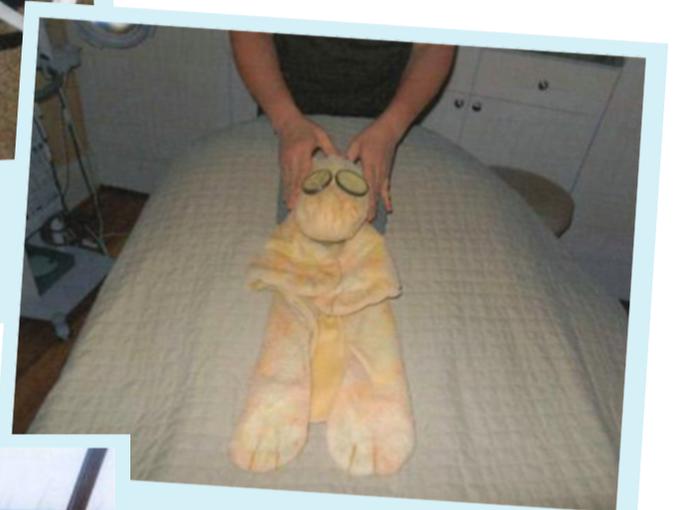
That night, Joshie's then home-away-from-home, the **Ritz-Carlton Hotel**, called to say that Joshie had been found, safe and sound, in the laundry. A couple of days later Joshie arrived back home. The fact that the Ritz-Carlton ensured Joshie made his way home is pretty great service. It's probably more than most hotels would do. Fewer still would go the extra, extra mile.

But Ritz-Carlton isn't a company to do things by halves. Inside the package, along with Joshie, was some Ritz-Carlton-branded merchandise. That's a nice gesture, but it's not why I'm telling this story. There was something else pretty special in that package...

A binder that “meticulously documented his extended stay at the Ritz.”



Here's Joshie sunning himself at the pool



Getting a massage



And taking a golf cart for a spin on the beach

This story takes customer service - and the desire to delight customers - to a whole new level. It's thoughtful, charming, and incredibly personal. It also goes to show that delighting customers doesn't have to break the bank - I doubt this stunt did.

Needless to say, Chris and his family were thrilled:

“My wife and I were completely wowed by the Ritz-Carlton Loss Prevention Team. It goes without saying that the Ritz-Carlton can count on my family to be repeat customers. But I’m also telling you (and everyone else who happens to read this story). This is something I’ve always told my staff – create an experience so amazing that someone can’t help but tell others about it, and you’re sure to succeed.”



In 2012, rumors started to spread that **Taco Bell** was going to open a branch in the isolated Alaskan town of Bethel.



Bethel

For a town only accessible by air or river that's 400 miles from the nearest Taco Bell, this was pretty exciting news. Unfortunately for the residents, it turned out to be a hoax.

Thankfully, Taco Bell heard of the hoax and reacted pretty swiftly. In what they dubbed "Operation Alaska," Taco Bell arrived in the town by helicopter, bringing with them 950 pounds of beef, 500 pounds of sour cream, 300 pounds of tomatoes, 300 pounds of lettuce and 150 pounds of cheddar cheese.

In other words: the ingredients for **10,000 Doritos Locos tacos**.



Not only were the residents understandably delighted (one woman said she hadn't eaten Taco Bell in more than 20 years), but the stunt resulted in tons of publicity for the chain, including thousands of Facebook likes.

What makes this case particularly interesting, however, is the fact that the people Taco Bell were delighting weren't, and couldn't really be, Taco Bell customers. But the stunt was so generous, and so elaborate, that you can bet it was delighting customers everywhere – even if they didn't directly benefit from it.



If the stories so far have left you feeling a little jaded – perhaps you feel that these companies' actions were more about publicity than genuinely wanting to delight customers – this one might make you change your mind.

Unfortunately it's a very sad story, but it's a fantastic example of how sometimes you should just screw the rules to do what's best for your customers. In 2011, Mark Dickinson was rushing to the airport to catch a flight to see his 2-year-old grandson for one last time. He was due to be taken off life support just a few hours later.

Reciting the incident to KABC, Dickinson said, "I was kind of panicking because I was running late, and I really thought I wasn't going to make the flight." While Dickinson was rushing through the airport, his wife had called Southwest and explained the situation, asking them if they would hold the plane.

When he arrived at the gate, still in his socks since he hadn't had time to replace his shoes after security, the pilot was waiting for him.

“I told him, 'Thank you so much. I can't tell you how much I appreciated that.' And he said, 'No problem. They can't leave without me anyway.”

That amazing pilot had taken a pretty big risk. Most airlines would punish a staff member who held up a flight. But a spokeswoman from Southwest described the pilot's actions as “exemplary”:

“You can't hold a plane for every late customer, but I think we would all agree that these were extenuating circumstances and the pilot absolutely made the right decision,” Southwest spokeswoman Marilee McInnis said. “I don't think you could ask for a better example of great service for our customers.”

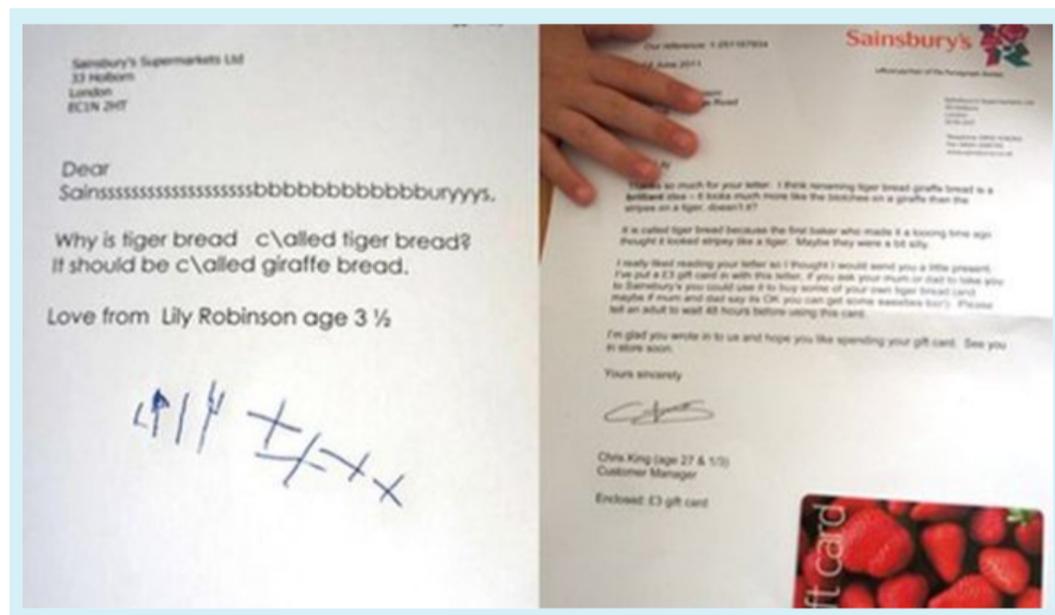
It feels wrong to use the word “delight” in the context of this story. There's nothing delightful about it. Dickinson's grandson very sadly died. But it's safe to say that what Southwest and the pilot did for him means he will be forever grateful for their actions and the fact that he was able to say goodbye to his grandson.

So let's not use the word delight here. Let's just use this story as a reminder of how underneath it all, looking out for your fellow human beings is the only thing that really matters – including in the context of a brand/consumer relationship.



Now, let's lighten the mood with a story from U.K. supermarket chain Sainsbury's.

In May 2011, three-year-old Lily Robinson wrote to the supermarket about the fact that she thought their tiger bread looked more like a giraffe, and thus should be called "giraffe bread."



Sainsbury's wrote back and agreed. They said renaming the bread was a "brilliant idea."

“I think renaming tiger bread giraffe bread is a brilliant idea - it looks much more like the blotches on a giraffe than the stripes on a tiger, doesn't it? It is called tiger bread because the first baker who made it a looong time ago thought it looked stripey like a tiger. Maybe they were a bit silly.”

They also included a gift card. But it's what happened very shortly after that makes this story special. They actually renamed the tiger bread "giraffe bread" – and [it's still called that today.](#)



When Ecommerce shoe and clothing retailer Zappos heard from a customer who had arrived on vacation in Vegas and left her favorite pair of shoes at home, Zappos saw an opportunity to go above and beyond and “delight” the customer in question.

The customer had tried to order a new pair of shoes for delivery to her hotel, but ran into problems when she discovered they were no longer being stocked. She called the company's helpdesk, which confirmed the shoes were no longer available (through Zappos at least).

Not to be defeated (and determined to delight the customer) Zappos took advantage of the location of its headquarters (just outside Vegas). It sent a member of its staff to purchase a pair of the shoes from a competitor and hand deliver them to the customer at their hotel.

This is just one of many incidents of awesome customer service served up by Zappos. Once on Thanksgiving, it paid all toll charges for a section of Massachusetts roads between 5 and 7 p.m. – just to make travel less stressful during the holidays.

Another time, a customer service rep at Zappos spent more than 10 hours on a call with a customer – not to solve a problem, but simply because the customer wanted to talk.

You can read [more stories of Zappos delighting customers here](#).

Little Gestures Delight, Too

The examples above all illustrate rather grand gestures that brands have carried out in an effort to delight their customers. If opportunities like the above present themselves to you, seize them, but if they don't, there's still plenty you can do.

Little gestures can delight your customers, too.



Include Notes with Orders

A handwritten note to thank your customers for shopping with you or being a customer is a quick, easy, and effective way of delighting and surprising them.

This is something we do with all new customers at When I Work. Judging by the responses we tend to get, it definitely delights.



Further reading:

[How to Write a Killer Thank-you Note](#)



Contact Customers Personally

An email, or better yet, a phone call from the CEO of a company goes a long way toward making customers feel special and valued. It doesn't happen often, for starters. Customers generally perceive CEOs to be unapproachable – too busy to talk to the little people. Show them you're different and instantly delight a customer.



Offer a Free Upgrade

Remember earlier when we spoke about hotel upgrades? Well, you don't need to be in the hospitality business to upgrade customers. SaaS (software as a service) firms might be able to surprise customers by upgrading them to a better plan, for example.

If you don't have a better plan, create one. Alternatively, develop a new feature that you can surprise your best customers with for free.



Send a Gift

It's an obvious one, but so few companies bother. I'm not sure why. Because it's expensive? It doesn't have to be. Even something as small as a packet of sweets can delight a customer when it's not expected.



Give Them a Discount

Reduce your customer's bill and send them a message to let them know you have and why (probably because they're a great customer and you want to thank them for it).



Host Events

Hosting an event or party is a foolproof strategy for surprising your customers and making them feel extra-special – just bear in mind that if you have a lot of customers you probably can't invite them all. This is also one of the more costly gestures on this list. Just don't cut corners; if you're going to delight your customers with a party, you need to do it properly.

Further reading:

[How to Throw a Client Party That Doesn't Suck](#)

Delight Your Ex-Customers

What happens when a customer ends their relationship with you? Do you take it personally? Do you just let them go with little more than a brief goodbye?

If so, you're missing a huge trick.

Customer delight shouldn't be reserved for your current customers – a customer going elsewhere doesn't stop them from being of value to you. End the relationship by delighting that ex-customer, and who knows – maybe in the future they might come back.

If not, there's still a chance that they might recommend you to someone else. Of course, this only happens if you end the relationship on the best possible terms. Do whatever it takes to make sure that customer goes away not just satisfied, but delighted.

Thankfully, there's plenty you can do to help sweeten the goodbye.



Send a Thank You Card and Gift

Send a card that thanks them for their business. Highlight what a pleasure it has been to work with them, and wish them all the best for the future. For bonus points, include a gift, too.



Provide Information That Will Help Them in the Future

Service-based businesses can offer information that could help the customer continue their own good work. Provide them with a detailed handout that reminds them of the work you've done so far and includes details of what they can do to continue it.

Not only is this a kind gesture, but it helps highlight how much hard work has gone into your client's account



Wrap Up Your Work Properly

It can be tempting to stop caring once you've received a client's notice, but, if anything, the time that remains in your working relationship is more important than whatever's come before.

Tie up any loose ends and leave projects in a state that makes it easy for the client to pick up the work and continue.

Chapter 3

CUSTOMER APPRECIATION



Delighting your customers naturally results in advocacy. In turn, this can lead to valuable testimonials and help to supercharge referral programs.

If you're not capitalizing on the delight you're offering customers, you're missing a huge trick.

CUSTOMER ADVOCACY

Brand advocates are those people who are so sold on your brand that they're happy to shout your praises from the rooftops.

They're made, not born. You have to work for them. Thankfully, they are often created as a result of companies taking steps to delight their customers. If you go away from this playbook and implement all, or even some, of the above strategies, brand advocates will almost certainly follow.

Leverage them.

They essentially provide [free](#) marketing for your company.

Reward Them for Their Help

Brand advocates are going to talk about you regardless – that's what makes them an advocate, not a customer. Generally however, they will only really talk about you when prompted. By rewarding their actions, you can encourage your advocates to actively promote you.



Treat advocates almost like you would a member of staff (just without the salary and healthcare). Offer them preferential rates and sneak previews of new products. You can even invite them to events, or if your brand is large enough (and you have enough advocates) arrange an event just for them.

Ask Them to Contribute Content

Walmart calls its brand advocates “[Walmart Moms](#)” – they are essentially a group of mommy bloggers who contribute content to the Walmart blog.



Is there scope for you to leverage your brand advocates in a similar way?

Why not ask them if they would be willing to write a blog post for you? You could offer regular writing spots to quality writers and if you have a great relationship with them, you could even let them take the hard work off your hands by giving them their own login for your CMS.

Ask for pictures, too. Encourage them to take photos of themselves (and their friends) using your products, and post them to social media. Go one better, and ask for video, too.

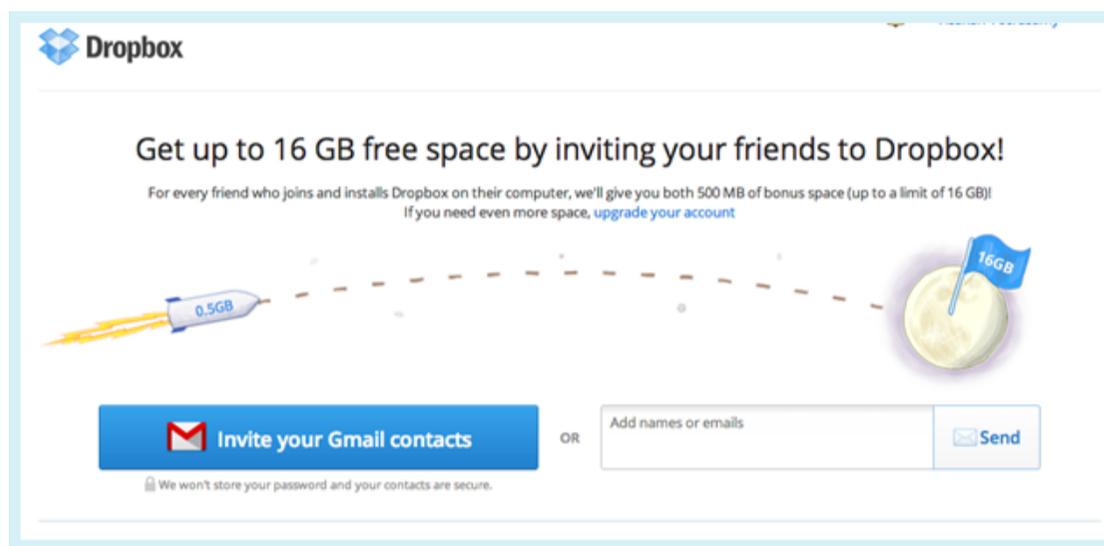
Ask for Testimonials



Alongside blog posts and social media content, ask your brand advocates to create testimonials about why they love your brand (and products). Wherever possible, encourage them to create both written and video testimonials.

REFERRAL PROGRAMS

A well-executed referral program can supercharge the growth of your company. It's how Dropbox went from nothing to a [10 billion dollar empire](#).



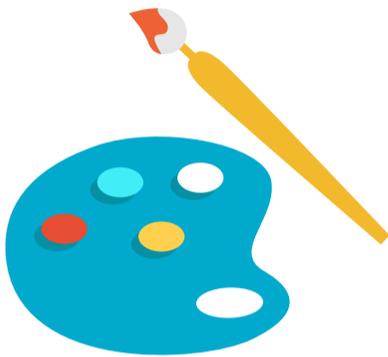
The referral program concept is pretty simple – you're incentivizing customers to recommend you to others by rewarding them when a lead they generated successfully converts. There are no set rules about what that reward should be. I see a lot of companies offering things like shopping vouchers or cold, hard, cash in exchange for a referral.

That's fine, but I think companies can boost results by offering rewards that help customers get more out of the product. This is what Dropbox did. The reward for referring friends to Dropbox is more cloud storage. Simple, clever, relevant, and genuinely useful to its customers. It also has a very low cost to execute.

This means Dropbox can encourage multiple referrals from each customer and maximize the impact of the scheme without it affecting the bottom line. Startups might struggle to offer a \$50 reward every time a customer refers someone new. It makes much more sense to reward customers with an enhanced service or free use of the product for a limited time.

This approach also helps customers get more out of your product. That means customers are more engaged with your brand and are more likely to recommend you and become brand advocates. **It's a win-win.**

Checklist



1 Design a user-friendly and intuitive website

- Ensure your site boasts a logical architecture and visitors can navigate easily to all areas of the site.
- Avoid using industry jargon in your copy that could alienate visitors.
- Ensure your product or service information is as detailed as possible. Leave nothing unsaid.



2 Underpromise and overdeliver

- Manage customer expectations, avoid disappointments, and create surprises by promising slightly less than you can expect to deliver.



3 Offer seamless customer support

- Allow customers to contact you using a range of channels, and implement software that allows you to track conversations across multiple channels for fully integrated and completely seamless customer support.



4 Aim for first contact resolution

- ✓ Implement systems and processes that help you resolve customer queries as quickly as possible – ideally during the first point of contact.



5 Build relationships

- ✓ Communicate with your customers, humanize your staff, and update followers to build genuine customer/brand relationships that benefit both parties.



6 Employ the right people

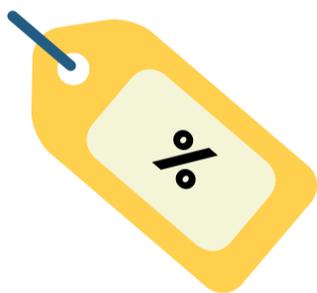
- ✓ Look for positive, motivated, and caring customer service staff members who can empathize with customers and have the resilience to deal with the difficult ones.



7 Case studies

- ✓ Morton's Steakhouse met a hungry follower at the airport with a steak.
- ✓ Archival went above and beyond for a visitor to its site by researching – unasked – alternative shipping cost options that would get the items to the customer for less.
- ✓ Ritz-Carlton returned a lost soft toy to its owner, but only after ensuring the toy enjoyed its own much-deserved vacation.

- Taco Bell sent ingredients for 10,000 tacos to an isolated Alaskan town after residents were disappointed that news of a Taco Bell opening locally was a hoax.
- Southwest Airlines held a flight so a grandfather could see his dying grandson one last time.
- Sainsbury's renamed one of their products following a suggestion from a three-year-old customer.
- Zappos found and purchased out-of-stock shoes from a competitor for a customer who had traveled to Las Vegas and forgotten their favorite Zappos pair - and they even hand-delivered them.



8 Little gestures delight, too

- Include thank-you notes with orders.
- (As the CEO or director) Contact customers personally.
- Offer a free upgrade.
- Send a gift.
- Give customers a discount for no particular reason other than to say “thanks for being a customer.”
- Host events or parties.



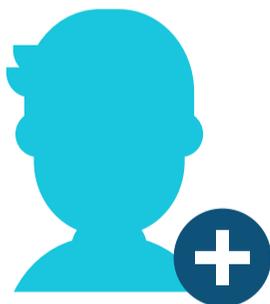
9 Delight your ex-customers

- Send them a “thank you for your business” card (potentially with a gift, too).
- Provide a detailed handout that will help them continue the work you’ve been doing.
- Wrap up your work properly - tie up loose ends so it’s easier for the customer to pick up where you left off.



10 Leverage your brand advocates

- Encourage them to actively promote you by offering them special rewards and privileges.
- Ask them to create content that you can use on your blog or share to social media.
- Ask them to contribute testimonials; ideally in both text and video format.



11 Create a referral program

- Incentivize customers for referring new customers to you, ideally by offering them an enhanced version of your product or free use for a limited time.

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