

It's not always about the money (customer feedback part 1)

Going by the emails I receive, some companies think that I don't do business with them solely because I can't afford to.



Every few weeks, a yoga studio I used to attend until my favorite teacher left sends me a dollars-off promotion. Come back, they say, here's an \$8 discount.

Then there's the company that is always sending me discounts for handyman services.

And there's a cosmetics company that sends emails telling me how I can get a free something or other with purchase (Only today! Only friends and family!).

It's not about money.

None of these companies has any idea why I am not a return customer. They've never asked me, but I'll tell you my reasons.

I haven't been back to the yoga studio because I don't like the teacher that is currently teaching during the time slot that is convenient for me. Additionally, I hurt my shoulder and I can't do yoga right now.

I haven't used the handyman company because I don't have a

current need. That's not to say I won't in the future, but there's nothing (knocking on wood here) that needs fixing right now.

The cosmetics company just yesterday was offering me a free lash-extender mascara. I wear contact lenses and I never use mascaras that extend because it bothers my eyes, so even a free mascara is not an enticement.

But at least they are tracking.

To their credit, these companies have noticed that I haven't been a customer for a while and they want me back. But they err in thinking that doing business is simply about money.

Here's the thing: Getting customers back is not as easy as offering a discount or a gift with purchase. You have to understand what motivates your customer.

The decision to buy something or do business with a company is often about more than just price. There are other factors, both tangible (e.g., need, convenience, timing) and intangible (e.g., trust, satisfaction, appreciation) that affect whether you shop somewhere or buy a certain product.

Sometimes, you have to ask.

If you've lost business or aren't getting repeat business, you have to ask why. Don't assume that everything can be fixed with a dollars-off promotion. Companies are collecting emails to do marketing or to send reminders. Well, they can also send a survey or even a personalized email.

Imagine how much more effective it would be if the yoga studio owner sent me an email saying she's noticed I haven't been there in several months and she'd like to know if I am still living in town or doing yoga.

How do you track your clients or customers? How do you entice them to come back? Let me know what works for you in the

comments.

Why getting feedback is important

If something is wrong with your product, don't you want to know about it? I think you do (and if not, you should!). Well, many marketers sometimes "forget" to include an essential piece of information: an address and/or telephone and/or email address that can be used for feedback. Some marketers don't want to be deluged with calls or emails so they either exclude this information or make it very hard to find. This is not a good tactic. It can backfire—you could lose a customer or many, especially if the issue is one that is repeatable. Let me give you two examples.

I had bought anti-virus software at a big-box store. I installed it, and it worked great. Of course, after a year, it told me I needed to update. The update was more expensive (of course) and could only be received via online download. Long story short, the update did not work. It screwed up my computer, and worse, I couldn't get it completely off my computer. I had to have a computer guy come remove the hard drive and delete all files relating to the software. Well, I tried to contact this software company. Was there a customer service number or an email? No. For tech support yes (the aforementioned Raj in India was not very helpful getting

resolution to the problem). In any case, I had no recourse and the company was not going to find out that their software has a bug in it. I will NEVER buy from this company again. Ever. Again.

Second case is maddening. For years, since I started my business, I advertised on a marketing site. I got a good number of hits from there, and so I paid for premium positions. Well, with very little fan fare, the site changed, and the writer category was transferred to a new domain. Apparently, the company did not advertise the new domain as well as the old one, and I got not ONE hit from the new domain. Meanwhile, every two months or so, I get an email from the site asking me to upgrade to a premium (read paid) subscription. I wanted to email that I would not because the site was not sending any hits. There was absolutely no email address to write to. And so when I see the emails coming from the company, I delete them. Is the owner of the site wondering why a former advertiser is no longer advertising? Is he concerned? If he is, he certainly doesn't want MY feedback. He only wants my credit card number. He can't even begin to address my concerns if he doesn't have them.

Bottom line, feedback is essential. Without it, you could have a defective or malfunctioning product on the market and no way of knowing about it. I am sure getting a ton of email can be a problem, but a bigger problem can happen if you start getting bad word of mouth and your sales start tanking. It's like putting a coin in the meter—it's annoying but not as annoying as getting a ticket!