



Building a long-term relationship
with your client

“Customer loyalty is the single most important driver of growth and profitability”

(Harvard Business Review)

Since the dawn of modern marketing sensibility, any marketer worth their salt knows the value of building loyalty and consumer communication. You cannot woo a client, and leave them high and dry as you move on to fish for more customers. Building a long-term relationship is more about consistency and continued quality standards rather than a one-time wow factor.

No matter how amazing a marketing campaign, it can only land a client. Keeping them on, is a far more demanding process.

Clients comes first

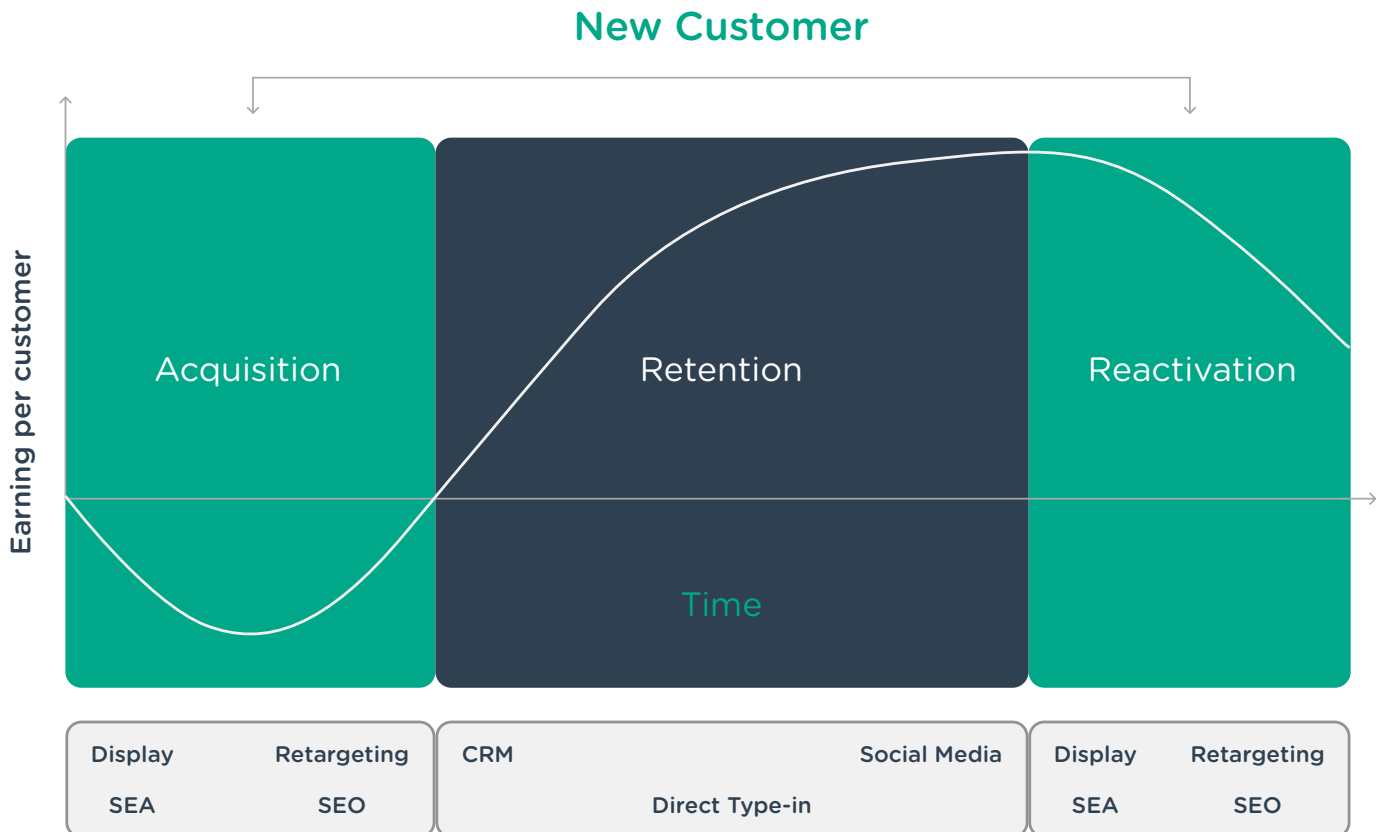
An important principle that most marketers seem to have forgotten is that “the client always comes first”. You cannot build a business model and incorporate the consumer in it. You have put the consumer at the center and construct your business strategy around them. Customer relationships affect the success of every business, but few businesses have a grasp of just how impactful loyalty can be.

According to a study 89 percent of consumers stop conducting business with a company due to a bad consumer experience. According to statistics released by Bain & Co, a consumer is four times more likely to look to a competitor if the consumer faces a service related issue. So at the end of the day product and pricing are impactful, but customer relations is the deciding factor.



Stream-lined communications

The modern consumer has little patience and is always looking for the best service/product in the market. Regardless of the industry, competition is fierce and replacements are plenty. If you don't offer your customer with the right kind of communication, at the right time and with value, you will be replaced by someone who does. So even if you land a client you won't keep them for long if your content and communication efforts are not up to the mark.



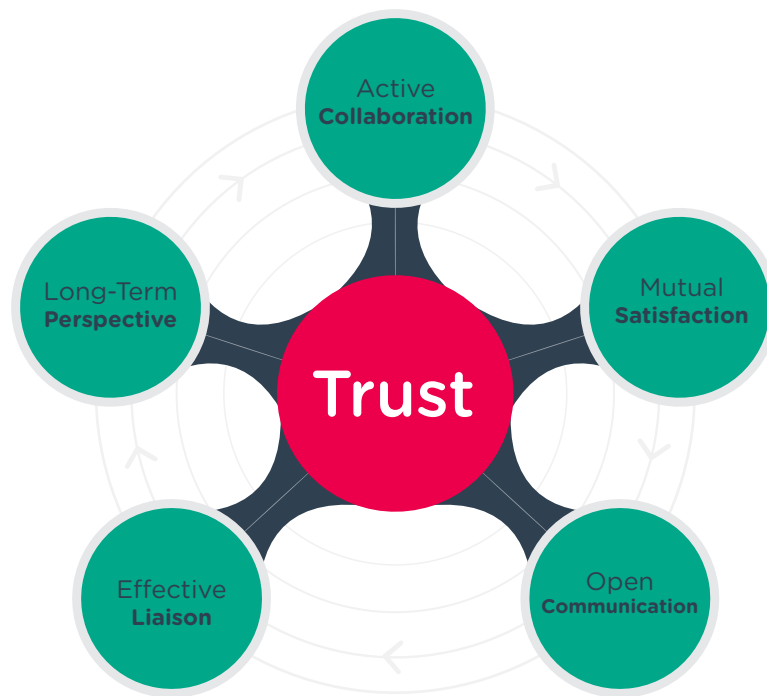
This is the age of automated emails, SMS, MMS and social media. There are plenty of channels to interact with your client. According to a study conducted by Totango, 81 percent of consumers say they are willing to pay more for quality communications and consumer services. However, timing is everything! Your aim should be to provide consistent "personalized" communication, answer queries "on time" and know the time to send your consumers with new promotions.



Going the extra mile

Even with a shoe string budget businesses have done wonders. Taking extra note, that extra bit of comfort, discounts, that new offer and in general just making life easier and a tad bit more pleasant with your company, this is what sets the tone for real success.

Airtel India is a mobile service provider that has tried to reach out to their customers by offering complete transparency. They showed their customers exactly what they were getting. By allowing their customers to see their operations they allowed for more consumer trust in their company. Through apps and SMS alerts Airtel consumers are made aware where they are getting proper signals and where all the airtel communication towers are. By doing this, Airtel has informed their customers why they are having trouble with signals in certain areas and what the company is doing to improve this situation. These SMS alerts have increased consumer confidence in Airtel.



Another example of extra effort is Trader Joe. They are famous for the importance they delegate to customer satisfaction. They keep trying to make their shopping experience better. Their facilitation of faster check-out lines, better product navigation and little efforts like food sampling makes for an easy and enjoyable experience making their customers come back.

Going the extra mile requires extensive market research and knowing your consumer and their changing likes and dislikes on a regular basis. A company that is well versed in the language spoken by their consumers always set themselves up for success and loyal consumers.

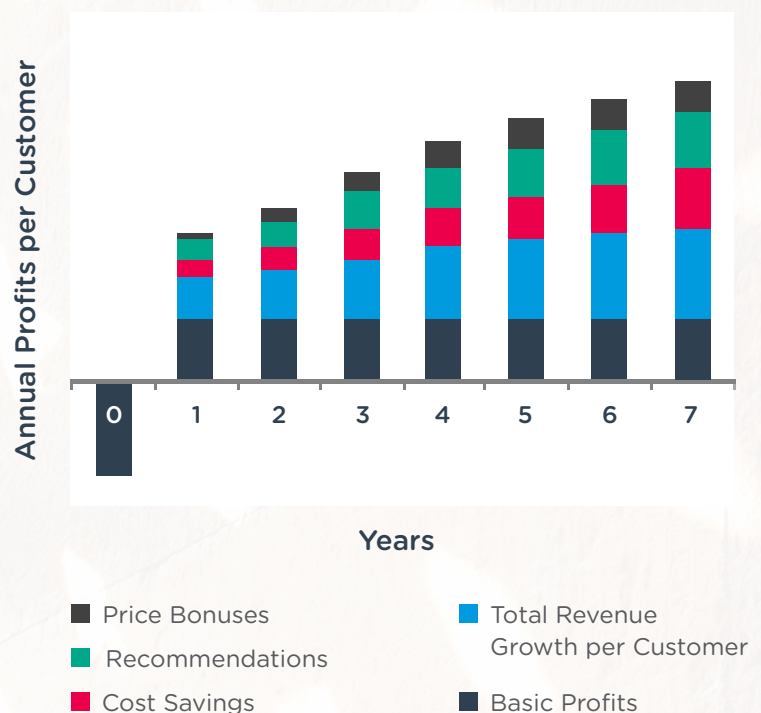


Building loyalty

Not every company has the resources or the deep pockets of the fortune 500. While spending top dollar can produce amazing results it can't beat an army of loyal customers that are the best brand ambassadors and are your passage to a larger pool of clientele. Good old fashioned word of mouth is still the top approach to business success.

How do you go about building long-term relationships with your clientele?

Monetary Benefit of Long-Term Customer Relationships



Give Time and Meet Deadlines

Getting work completed on time is not just great for productivity; it also creates confidence in your consumer regarding your abilities to deliver. A proper plan from marketing, to customer interaction to delivery to follow up needs to be set up, no one area should be lacking. Give your process time and allow yourself the patience to perfect your system before approaching the consumer. Never test the feasibility of a strategy or system on your loyal customers to gain new ones.

Always give your plan time and margin for error, don't promise an early timeline just to impress your clientele and fail to deliver or give a poor result. For things to work efficiently time margins are essential, consumers do not like surprises especially bad ones.

Honesty is the best policy

Clarity regarding your services/products is paramount. You must never lie to the consumer don't rely on half-truths either. Be honest, period. It will save you a lot of unnecessary issues. Lying about your capability can lead to consumer disappointment. Be realistic and be true regarding quality, standards and the level of your product/service.

Telling the truth can lead to an understanding consumer that appreciates your transparency and will trust you more. Nothing brings referrals like transparency. Your clientele needs to understand your level and what you offer clearly before they choose you.

Companies that offer too much and pretend to be bigger than they are, are likely to lose face. If you are going to pretend regarding the size and scale of your operations the consumer will demand more and more often than not false pretenses can lead to only disappointment. Talking a big game is easy, following through is another matter entirely. Look towards your consumers as if they are your friends and your consumer will reward you with loyalty and preference.



Share your knowledge

Every business has an area of expertise. Consumers like to be informed and information transfer is easier with today's technology. Statistics have proven that people with more informative access from their companies tend to make loyal consumers.

To create a solid network it is important to offer something that inspires loyalty and valuable expertise is something where you can't go wrong. However, not all consumers want to know the facts and figures. Balance your customers' needs and expectations while keeping them at the center of your strategy.



SMS and Voice Messages

There is nothing that screams personalized quite like perfectly crafted SMS content. Not only is the open rate more than 98% the potential of clientele is immense. It's no wonder companies are finally moving towards SMS and voice call or message channels. Since this is a highly underrated and underutilized mode of communication the possibilities are endless.

Texts are Always Read

While the dangerous unpredictability of a text message still frightens many businesses its reach is quite phenomenal and without spending top dollar. Quite a few companies waste, time and energy trying to improve their customer service by relying on call centers, chasing unresponsive leads or end up in spam folders.

The future of marketing is two-way SMS, giving the customer the possibility of interaction minus the call waiting or talking to a remote customer service agent.

Here are a few potential changes in the B2C system that can create great ground work for communication and long-term clients.




Texts are **always read.**

The opt-in ratio is **65% higher.**

Consumers prefer receiving communications and promotions **via SMS.**

Consumers have shown a preference for SMS coupons and calendar alerts **by their favorite brands and companies.**



People look at
their phone

150

times per day



58%

Login to their
Facebook daily



57%

Check their email less
than 4 times a day





Two Way Communications Channel

Two way SMS is better than promotions and one sided tests because the focus is on company to consumer dialogue. More than that texts are a great way to measure the responses of your consumer. While there is no denying the effectiveness of online customer support portals and call centers, they are still both time consuming and pricey. By choosing the SMS route companies save time and the customer representative's time can be utilized better. The call to action nature of SMS allows clients to reserve, change, receive payments, cancel appointments etc.

Better Concessions and Approaches

Concessions, advertisements and sales can be better consolidated with the usage of transactional and promotional SMS. Your customers will appreciate reminders and notices regarding time-sensitive promotions. A single SMS can do an entire marketing campaign's worth of interaction. If you make the content of your SMS more personalized and interactive the consumer is bound to stick around.



The Usage of Short Codes

Short Codes is an added advantage for companies; offering businesses a simple process which allows them to create “SMS bulk marketing”. Shorter than a typical long code they are easier to retain compared to a phone number. With a short code, setting automated responses and the consumer conversation management ensuring a quality SMS experience.

Is it a Perfect Plan?

There are no perfect plans for your business, but there are always better techniques and ideas that can really boost the potential for long term relationships with your clientele. Lots of companies don't want to use SMS to avoid the risks attached to it and the unpredictable nature of this tool. But there are no perfect plans and SMS is no better, but, it is definitely the marketing tool of choice for the future. Consumers prefer being reached by SMS these days. If you keep providing them with quality in every department they will keep coming back and each time with a few other connections that will only add to the overall brand image of your company. A large network of loyal consumers can push a company from startup to conglomerate, no matter what the size of the company always remember your first clients and always remember why a consumer left and in between lines the map to a successful business.





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