

## **Bring out the Fan Factor in your Customers!**

### **What's the difference between a satisfied customer and a fan?**

Customer retention and satisfaction are important to all companies because it costs so much more to acquire customers than retain them. While satisfied customers are a good start, loyal “fans” are much more likely to recommend your company, pay premiums, provide constructive feedback on new programs, products and services, and rebuff your competitors’ approaches. Establishing a Customer Loyalty program that all employees work toward is critical in making customers fans. The following guidelines will provide you short term and longer term steps to creating such a program.

### **Know your customers**

Keep accurate records of your customers and view their data on a regular basis. Knowing who your best customers are and why will help you drive delivering that same level of service for all of your customers.

### **Consistently deliver excellence**

Your customers should be able to rely on consistently high levels of quality, on time delivery and excellent service. Over delivering on commitments should be the only inconsistency your customers experience.

### **Don't reward bad behavior**

Treating poor customers as well as your best customers not only reinforces the poor behavior, but also reduces your profits. Save those critical time deliveries for those customers who pay consistently on time and are easiest to service, and consider charging premiums to those customers that are a drain to your organization.

### **Say “thank you” and “we're sorry”**

When you acquire a new customer, thank them formally for their business. This can be as simple as a thank you note welcoming them to your business. For your largest customers, consider establishing an exclusive, top customer recognition event. And if your customer has had a bad experience due to your company's underperformance, acknowledge and address how you will avoid this in the future.

### **Establish a Formal Customer Resolution Process**

Ensure you have a formal resolutions process with specific roles and accountabilities for if and when your customers have an issue. Don't allow a customer to get caught in the pass-the-customer-buck game.

### **Establish Measurements and Goals**

Develop satisfaction surveys and benchmark results against comparable companies. Keep things simple (one page surveys are best) and make sure you follow up on survey items – using the results to continually improve the customers' perception of your company. Surveys should be of two types – transactional (based on specific interactions) and periodic (to track overall loyalty). Many specialty companies can you with survey

and benchmarking services for your industry, if you don't have the capability to do this in house.

### **Communicate & continually improve**

Once you've got the information on current customer satisfaction in your company, establish goals for overall satisfaction, loyalty and retention and share these with all of your employees. Consider making satisfaction an employee recognition component, not only at individual transaction level, but also at company wide goals levels.

### **Ask for help**

Customers that are fans want to promote you; they've made an investment in you and are proud of that investment. Publish their testimonials as a part of your marketing materials and develop a formal reference program that pre-screens and qualifies matching prospects with these customers. Use these same customers for focus groups on future initiatives your company is planning. Customers love to take part in strategy for developing solutions to their needs.

### **Do your customers know how your company is growing?**

Are all of your customers aware of creative solutions your company has put in place? Are they aware of awards and acknowledgements your company has received? Pride and confidence in knowing they've selected a continually innovative company is a key element in retaining customer loyalty.

Know your customers – their wants, their needs and their perceptions. Identify what your “fan” customers love about your service, products and solutions, and promote and implement those experiences throughout your company. You'll be well on your way to growing your profits while expanding your customer base.