

TITAN TIMES NEWSLETTER

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TITAN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GROUP, LLC

They Get it ...

A Great Example of Customer Care as Viable Strategy



It is May as I write this – almost Memorial Day. Another great day – not too hot, not too cool. The greenery is bountiful, and the outdoor activities have kicked into gear. I’ve also fallen victim to a longtime curiosity about Motorhomes and finally pulled the trigger on it this weekend. What I found in my travels was a completely noteworthy example of a business that really “got it”. They understood the concept of customer care, along with the benefits of retaining those customers for years into the future. It quickly seemed clear that both were a priority.

The RV industry has a \$50 Billion Dollar impact on the US Economy. Today’s average RV owner is about 48 years old, has an approximate household income of \$68,000 and typically takes four weeks of vacation a year, with 90% of those feeling it is the best way to travel with kids. AND ... April and May just happen to be the most popular months to go RVing. RV owners tend to be loyal customers. RVers tend to pick a shop to buy their rig from, their accessories, and one that is also available to assist with upgrades and service calls. Nowadays, that kind of loyalty is becoming a rarity. So it’s no surprise that the posters and cutout displays in front of - and when you walked into the dealership that is the subject of this article predominantly featured couples in their mid 40’s to mid 50’s dressed in smart, but “everyday” type clothing – and nothing to suggest the weather was either very warm nor too cold, playing with children and young adults of varying ages, while fresh grilled burgers and hot dogs where somewhere conspicuous in most of the pictures. The theme of “family fun” was hard to miss.

We walked through the front doors and received a very warm hello from the front-end receptionist, who asked how our day was going and offered us some fresh-baked cookies and coffee. And to be sure, these cookies *were* freshly baked, and this dealership is one of the largest on the East Coast. Wow – that takes some serious commitment to have those there ... and in volume. I asked the receptionist and she informed me that the fresh baked cookie supply is replenished three times a day!

Quick pleasantries ensued and she asked how or to whom we could be directed. Within a minute of explaining what we were looking for, a salesman eagerly approached, confidently, but with some of the most non-threatening
(continued next page)

Inside this issue:

They Get It ...	1
How to Identify Your Target Market	3
Masterful Quotes	4



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body-language I've ever seen on a salesperson. After a brief chat, he took us to look at some RV's - we rode through the expanse of parking lot that held their inventory, on a very well-polished golf cart that also held a cooler of bottled water. The entire time, the salesman asked all the *right* questions and offered useful information, whittling down the sea of choices based on what features and capabilities we most preferred – not on what the dealership might have had the best margins on or the most inventory of.

Reasonably quickly, we selected an RV and sat down to talk terms. The transaction was entirely friendly and unobtrusive. He avoided *ALL* of the pushy tactics and tacky maneuvers many automotive dealers have a classic reputation for. Within 15 minutes, we had ink on paper along with a deal that we were very happy with. In fact, knowing most RV owners trade in their motorhome for a newer, different class or model within 5-7 years, it became clear to me that they were doing everything they could to make sure we were happy and would be repeat customers. After all, it is less expensive to cultivate a repeat customer than it is to find a new one entirely. Industry statistics tell them that loyal RV customers will inject profit into the business (at least) two to three times instead of just once. And let's not forget the additional revenue from accessories and services mentioned earlier. Forward thinking – a smart strategy.

On the day we picked up our new RV, we were greeted (by appointment) at the door with VIP passes to hang around our necks on a lanyard. (Great idea!) This VIP pass entitled us to some “extra special treatment” from all employees, such as with periodic check-ins to see if we needed anything, including coffee delivered by hand, more baked goods, a very reasonable discount on any accessories (and necessities) we might make, a personal introduction to the dealership's owner (which included a great backstory on his charitable work with dogs) , a cloth gift tote that included several useful items (all with logo's, of course), and a dedicated technician to walk us through using the Camper and to answer every single question we had. In fact, he spent three hours entirely dedicated to setting us up, using EVERY feature, talking maintenance and providing advice on planning and taking trips with our new purchase. And let's not forget – more snacks. We were treated like royalty. Even the Finance Team was spot on. Quick, efficient, prepared, polite and sounded genuinely thankful for our business.

On the way out the door, the owner greeted us one last time to congratulate us and thank us once again for our business. He told us he hopes everyone treated us (even better than) family and shared another quick story about how service and ongoing customer support helped grow his small business into one of the largest on the Coast. Not in a “salesy” way – just enough to remind us to keep them in mind as we move forward.

All in all, this trip was memorable enough that it serves communicating to you as a great example of appropriate marketing activities, understanding your customer base and their behavior patterns, paying attention to their needs, treated them well, a commitment to their satisfaction, showing appreciation and acknowledging the additional opportunities customer retention brings. Quite a refreshing pleasure. This dealership really “got it” - customer care as viable strategy.

How to Identify Your Target Market

Having a product or service to sell, but not putting the word out on the streets, is kind of like kissing a girl in a closet – you know about it, but no one else does. Enter the concept of advertising. Not to understate things, but it “can” be relatively simple to advertise to the masses. The trick, of course, is making sure that your advertising is reaching the right people. Knowing whom and when to market your product or service to can result in much higher rates of return and it involves implementing systems, rather than relying on indiscriminate marketing. Let’s talk a little bit about identifying just precisely who your target market is.

To be effective, you must *sharpen your focus*. Determine what your main priorities are in relation to whom you wish to reach with your marketing and what needs or wants your product or service fulfills. As you answer the latter part of this, consider factors like age, buying power, marital status and geographic location. For example, a middle-aged mother of three has different needs and desires than a college sophomore. She also tends to spend her disposable income in a much different way. Likewise, millennial men, on average, spend twice as much on clothing than their non-millennial counterparts. GM and Ford understand that marketing pickup trucks to drivers in North Dakota or Texas will yield better results than trying to market them in New York City.

So how do we start? *Try using a multi-stage funnel approach*. For example, your first “stage” or “level” into the wide mouth of the funnel might be gender. Then perhaps the next level might further narrow things down to a specific age-range. Next, you might further thin-out those targets by income level (or geography, etc). The trick is that you need to experiment with different criteria to narrow down to a well-defined description of who your ideal customer is; the one that can generally describe who the majority of your customers are.

Your funnel should also consider what the *primary value proposition* of your product or service is. For example, suppose you are marketing a camera that can withstand hard drops, rough handling and submersion in water. Those could be value propositions well-received by outdoor enthusiasts. And let’s take this a step further – where do those individuals shop?

Choosing the right markets also means that you should be *consciously collecting some objective data*. Some ways you might do this are through surveys. These can be accomplished by mail, through your website, via a newsletter, by personal interview, or even by purchasing the data from companies that specialize in data collection.

Likewise, *don’t overlook drawing on existing data*. If your business offers a product or service similar to those already on the market, do as much homework as possible. What demographic groups are buying these products? When do they buy them? Which specific products in the entire lineup are most popular?

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Perhaps you are looking to market your own coffee shop. Go spend some time at a competitor's establishment ... and preferably several. As people place their orders at the counter, take careful notes – what drink did each person buy? How old is each person, and what is his or her gender and ethnicity? Is a particular drink especially popular? When is the store busiest? Once you compile your data, you can then apply the findings to the marketing efforts for your own coffee company. There is a plethora of data that you can find online to gather a macro view of the type of customers who are purchasing products similar to what you offer, as well.

The next time you are in front of friends, customers or colleagues, *ask* them to look at your product or service and offer-up their perspective on its uses. You may be surprised and learn of some innovative ways in which it could be used or by whom it might seem to be desirable.

Whenever possible, draw on diverse perspectives as you build your marketing efforts. Your end goal is to make it easy for your target demographic groups to see connections between their needs and your product. The analysis of multiple streams of data, as well as a continual effort to identify your target customers, can help you achieve this end *and* maximize your ROI.

Masterful Quotes

“Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve. Thoughts are things! And powerful things at that, when mixed with definiteness of purpose, and burning desire, can be translated into riches.”

– Napoleon Hill

*“People are definitely a company's greatest asset.
It doesn't make any difference whether the product is cars or cosmetics.
A company is only as good as the people it keeps.”*