

Winning with Customers

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Ask Charlie Sheen any question and he has a single response: “winning...duh”. Whether he’s winning or not is still up for debate as we continue to watch his maniacal meanderings. Admit it. You’ve found yourself watching this train wreck known as Charlie Sheen as he launches another of his bizarre and often outrageous verbal onslaughts against pretty much anything and anyone. Most recently, he placed the CBS executives in charge of his sitcom, *Two and a Half Men*, squarely in his sights. After attacking the network across practically every medium with his unfailingly colorful, if not somewhat confusing diatribes, CBS took action and fired the eccentric Sheen. This action seemed to take many entertainment “experts” by surprise, as if Sheen is just too valuable and too big a star to be fired. From where I sit, it’s the rare person or company whose service or product cannot be replaced. Even for those that are authentically unique, if maintaining the relationship creates more discord than harmony, you can count on the other party to cut the cord.

While you may not have experienced this situation on such a nuclear level as the Charlie Sheen scandal, you can probably think of a time when a company or person seemed to think they were untouchable; when their value to you or your company was so great, you’d simply have to do business with them no matter what.

How about your own company? Do you nurture your client relationships or take their business for granted? Do you consider your operation to be “the only game in town” or do you treat each client as if they are your sole focus and reason for being? Do you ensure your clients are aware of what makes your company uniquely qualified to serve them without acting as if you are simply unique?

Let’s face it. Business is just too hard to come by to NOT follow some basic principles of sound customer service. Employ the following techniques and you’re sure to increase your sales success and boost client confidence in your company’s ability to serve their needs.

Know What You’re Selling

In its most simplistic form you sell confidential shredding if you are a destruction company, shelf space if you are a records center and slots if you are a media vault. In reality, you know that you’re selling much more. The business of storing, managing and destroying your customers’ information assets is really a service-based business rather than a commodity-based business. When positioning your sales message, keep in mind that your potential new customer will best respond to a message that describes how your company will ensure accuracy, while providing the highest degree of security and compliance of their

important information assets. In other words, it isn't that you *will provide* security and so forth. They want to know *how* you accomplish this and *what this means to their business*.

Shhhh...Just Listen

Too often, salespeople launch into the sales pitch, citing statistics, testimonials and all the reasons a prospect should do business with their company instead of listening to what the prospect is seeking to accomplish. What are their challenges or pains? What have they done thus far to address these challenges and what will make them feel like they have achieved success in tackling these issues? Why are they interested in doing business with your company – or any company like yours that provides similar services? By understanding your prospects' needs and issues first, you will be in a better position to return with a much more meaningful solution and hopefully, add a new company to your growing list of clients.

Be Specific

A potential new customer wants to know specifically what your company does differently from other companies in the market and why that should matter to them. Provide detailed information about how your company conducts its business and how that will help them deal with their pains. Share information about the software you use and its specific features that will enable them to better manage their information assets. Provide detail on what systems you already have in place in an effort to make them feel confident that their materials are being professionally managed.

Invest in Technology

While it's often tempting to take a little bit from here and a little bit from there to cobble together technology-based solutions, these often fall short of your requirements and your customers' expectations in terms of effectiveness and ease-of-use. Do your research to find the best solution to streamline business processes – not only internally, but externally as well. When demonstrating your "technological edge," let the customer try it out first-hand so they can experience for themselves the value you can bring to their business.

While Charlie Sheen's version of winning may apply in his world of warlocks, the rest of us depend on strategies such as these to win new business – and keep it.

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