

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS TIPS

APRIL, 2011

TOP 5 CUSTOMER RETENTION TACTICS, BARBARA WOLD

Here are some ideas to help you kick-start your customer retention marketing:

- 1. Regular Communication with Customized Content and Special Offers** – This is the cornerstone of any good customer retention program and careful attention should be paid here. Most companies have some sort of newsletter to communicate with existing customers but fewer are actively making offers to their current client base that are customized according to what is already known about the customer.
- 2. Customer service** – Poor customer service accounts for 70% of customer loss. Marketing should take that number very seriously and work with the support team to deliver content that can help the service folks and sales staff do their job.
- 3. Listen (and then talk)** – The overwhelming majority of unhappy customers will never communicate their dissatisfaction with you.

Regularly checking in on customers will help you to see signs of an impending departure while there's still time to fix problems.

- 4. Loyalty programs, appreciation awards and customer referral rewards** – rewarding customers for referring you new business or for repeat buys is always a good idea. Even in markets where that isn't appropriate you can still give customers an award to recognize them (and give them something to brag about).
- 5. Bring Your Customers Together** – at large companies an annual customer conference tends to be one of the most successful marketing tactics done. Companies with smaller customer bases and budgets are doing similar things by creating online spaces (in the form of forums, custom social networks, Facebook or LinkedIn groups, etc) where customers can connect, share their experiences and learn from each other.

Mark Your Calendars!

April 13

Coffee Talk with Small Business Expert Barbara Wold
8:30 am

Dahlonega Market Place

April 23

Dahlonega Appalachian Jam Begins!

Every Saturday April 23– October 8, 2-5 PM, Gold Museum Lawn

May 6

Emerald Rose

First Friday Night Concert Series

6:30 PM Hancock Park

Every First Friday May through October

May 7

Dahlonega Farmers Market Begins!

Every Tuesday & Saturday May 7 through October 29, 7 am-3pm, Hancock Park

6 FEATURES YOUR WEBSITE WILL FAIL WITHOUT, LISA BARONE

Whether you're a brick-and-mortar or you're strictly an online shop, you need a website. And while many small business owners are starting to come to terms with this, I can't tell you how many SMBs I've spoken to who have spent considerable amount of money (often five figures) on a website that simply "didn't work." Either it didn't do a good job selling, wasn't spiderable (please don't build your whole site in Flash) or simply didn't address any of the things important to wary customers. Don't let this happen to you. Make sure your site will give customers the information they need before you invest in a flashy (no pun intended) design. Below are six things your website should absolutely have. Are you covering all your bases?

- 1. Intuitive Navigation**—A user landing on your website should not have to spend time deciphering how to work

their way around. Instead, it should be intuitive. Make it simple. Something else to consider: Call things what they are instead of trying to be clever.

- 2. Sticky Content**—You want to have something that will attract a potential customer and lure them further into your site. Bringing attention to your best content brings attention to the best parts of your brand. Show it off a little.
- 3. A Blog**—As an SMB, there is no better way to establish a point of difference, become known for thought leadership or consistently attract links and attention than by putting a blog on your site and using it to share information and/or start conversations.
- 4. Your Address, Phone Number & Contact Information**—One of the most powerful ways for a small business owner to establish credibility is to include a local address, phone number,

and a few ways for customers to get in touch with them (e-mail address, Twitter, Facebook page, etc.). By highlighting this information, you show people that you're real and that you'll be easy to get a hold of should they have a question or a concern.

- 5. Reviews**—It's important that small business owners not only encourage reviews, but also be proactive about getting as many of them as they can. As the Web gets more social, online reviews are being shown to have more weight and prominence.
- 6. Calls to Action**—Users are on your site. Be sure to tell them what you want them to do! Your calls to action should be as clear and intuitive as your navigation. It's the only way they'll work.

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IS IT TIME TO RE-FOCUS, RE-POSITION, RE-GROW YOUR BUSINESS? RICK SEGAL

Re-focus is looking at our business objectively. Look at it as our customers would. Look at your business as a business consultant would. Look at it the way an investor would. Focus on the things it takes to not only make money today but to make money or make even more money over a longer period of time. In other words, focus on a model that can sustain long-term profitability. What re-focusing does is to force us to look at areas of our business we might not have looked at for years. Many times we make certain assumptions when we go into business and some of these assumptions that become our standard operating procedure are wrong or should be readjusted. We want to Re-focus on every procedure or thing we do and question why we are doing it the way we are. We get into bad habits and this is the time to become brutally honest. Why do we have to? We have to because of all the changes that are constantly in motion, such as:

- Marketing Areas
- Customers' Preferences
- Economic Conditions
- Innovation
- Buying Habits
- Increases in Competition

- New Retailing Concepts and Competition
- Staying Relevant

Then we have the issue of pricing and how we must re-focus on that. We also need to re-focus on:

- What type of customer do you feel most comfortable with?
- What type of customer do you want more of?
- What type of customer do you want less of?

In addition, we also need to Re-Focus on our current niches and possible specialties or niches. It is also the time to examine our:

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Opportunities
- Threats

Before we can start to re-grow our businesses, we need to need to reposition our business in a way that the new customer and old customer will understand. We need to know:

- How our customers perceive us
- How we want our customers to perceive us

Learn More About the Contributing Authors

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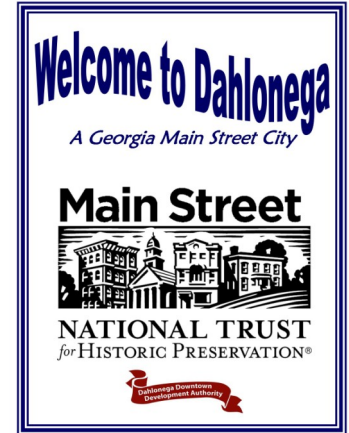
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Lisa Barone
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News Corner

True Dahlonega Hospitality

The Downtown Development Authority wants to thank all participating merchants for welcoming the Main Street 101 Conference participants into their businesses with open arms. We hope everyone had a successful week.



For more information visit
"What's New" at www.dahlongegadda.org



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The "Downtown Business Tips" newsletter is intended to provide merchants with monthly information about improving their business's position in the market! Please send your comments & suggestions to Rebecca James (contact information listed above).

Use our website www.dahlongegadda.org for business resources.

See tabs for "Doing Business Downtown" and "Projects & Services"

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"DAHLONEGA DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (MAIN STREET)"