

## Should I Treat all Customer the Same?

Written by Steve Marr  
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We need to give every customer our full attention and respect. However, this doesn't mean that we should treat all customers equally every day.

When I was in international trade, I had a customer with whom we had a large account. He would call me between 8:30 and 8:45 for the sole purpose of talking about the Detroit Lions football game, which was frequently a sad conversation. Since Mondays were typically pretty busy, I really didn't have time for a 15 to 20-minute chat about the football game. However, because he was one of my best customers; I took time for a social chat that I would not have spent with others, especially on Monday morning.

There are circumstances when we simply may not have a moment to take extra time. Unfortunately, people generally pick up on our lack of interest. When we cut people off quickly, they become irritated because they believe we don't care what they have to say. They can tell when we're anxious to get off the phone or rush through a conversation. It causes friction that we pay for later. When I face time constraints I can't change, I may explain to the customer that I have a commitment and will call back at another time to thoroughly discuss their concern or request.

One of my best customers asked me to join the local Chamber of Commerce, something I wasn't particularly interested in. Since the annual cost was only \$200, I readily agreed, even though I wasn't planning to attend meetings. My customer was on the member recruitment committee and was participating in a contest. If the request had come from a customer with whom we did little business, I likely would have politely declined.

While I will not ever intentionally shortchange a customer and provide less than we agreed, there are circumstances where I will go beyond what is necessary for certain customers.

Proverbs instructs: "To show partiality is not good, but for a piece of bread a man will do wrong." (Proverbs 28:11, ESV) I believe this verse means we are to treat all customers with kindness and respect and not shortchange anyone. At the same time, not everyone gets the same pricing or service.

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I remember another example from my time in the international trade business when I had several customers who asked if they could have the same pricing as our largest account customer. I told them, "When you provide the same volume as XYZ company, I'll be more than happy to give you the same price."