

## Do Your Customers Know You?

Written by Steve Marr  
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In sales management 101, we learn that we have a responsibility to know our customers. A follow-up question is do our customers know us? The principle to remember is that people prefer to buy from somebody they know rather than from a stranger.

There is a difference between relational selling and processing an order. To adopt relational selling means you take steps to make sure your customers know you and your company personally. When I work with clients with sagging sales, I help them examine why customers have left their business. Frequently, we find that it's the regular customers who have departed. Our job is to understand why and create a strategy to keep current customers, create new customers, and reconnect with lost clients.

Here are some ways to reconnect.

- Make a personal contact.

Face-to-face visits are important when possible. However, when an in-person contact is not possible; use the telephone or other communication methods. Customers are less likely to leave when you've established a personal relationship. This is a relationship where your customer understands your business and you clearly understand your customer.

- Send a monthly newsletter.

You can send it by mail or email. The key is to make sure the information is useful and interesting to the end user. By providing helpful and actionable information your customer will see more value in maintaining a relationship with you.

- Share a gift.

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Look for gifts that other businesses do not use. A small thing like dropping off a tin of homemade cookies may be helpful. I found a person who makes delightful, high-quality, handmade soap. I buy these in quantity and hand them out with a short note indicating that they are locally handcrafted with only natural ingredients. Customers react well to the gift because it's local and different. Everybody gives pens. That's why I don't.

- Prepare a handout.

I have a interest in a damage restoration company and spend time making direct face-to-face customer visits. Each month I develop an individual handout covering an important aspect of the restoration business from the customer's point of view. This allows me to leave something with the customer after I depart. Frequently, I find that they share the article with other office staff.

- Send a handwritten thank you card.

Handwritten cards have an impact primarily because almost no one sends them. Likewise birthday cards, while some consider old school, have an impact because few send these today. Or consider sending Christmas cards every year. Have you noticed how some establishments used to tape their Christmas cards to a wall? Today you see very few, which is why they have an impact.

We see this principle articulated in the book of Hebrews instructing us to “think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:24-25, NLT) When you show your customer acts of love you motivate them to remain customers for all the right reasons.