

Why Customers Never Return - And How To Get Them Back

By John Madden

The greatest challenge in most businesses today is to be able to guarantee that your customers will continue to do business with you, and that they will say good things about your company's product and service, thereby ensuring stability and continual growth.

Most business owners and managers are shocked by the apparent disappearance of customers who tried them once and never returned. Even more frustrating to them are the customers whom they considered regulars who suddenly stopped using their services.

And they have no idea why this is happening! Why? Because their customers didn't tell them. Why didn't they tell them? Because only about four percent of people who have a problem with your service will actually tell you, or complain. That's a fact of life!

A recent study breaks it down like this for why customers don't return:

1% - Died – hopefully it wasn't something in the food!

3% - Moved. Nothing personal - they just moved.

5% - Went to try a friend's business.

9% - Went to the competition.

14% - Were dissatisfied with your product.

68% - Didn't like the attitude of you and/or your people!

Is this a shock? For many it is. One client told me at the beginning of a consultation, "I don't understand why business is off so much, we get very few complaints". That's those four-percenters. If you have only one complaint, it means twenty-five people probably were dissatisfied in some way.

How can you stop the bleeding and hold onto your customers, especially that 68%? Here are some of the ways:

1. Ask your customers how you're doing with your product and your service. **If they say, "Fine", they probably won't be coming back in a hurry. So find out what was not acceptable or what was less than excellent.**

2. Ask your employees why they think business is down. **They who are right there on the front lines have more knowledge about this than you think, and their opinions and insight are invaluable.**

3. Have a policy about first and last impressions. If the person sitting at your reception desk, or the host or server in your restaurant, chooses not to smile and greet every customer who comes in the door or who calls on the telephone, your service is mediocre or less, and you are missing the biggest opportunity to set up a great kick-off experience for future long-term clients. Show by your own example, and then demand it as part of your way of doing business.

4. Reward complainers; they are your saviors. It's a well-known fact that most people don't like to complain for the reasons we're familiar with – the biggest reason being that they don't think you'll do anything about it. And most mediocre businesses don't! Let your customers know that you appreciate – nay, depend on – their feedback to help you serve them better. They'll love to hear you say that, and they'll show it by giving you another try.

5. Reward your employees for 're-selling' to your customers. To have your customers return, you have to re-sell them on the idea. It costs a lot more to find new customers than it does to keep existing customers. Your front line people have the power to create new loyal customers – but they also have the power to *lose* valuable customers. How you treat your employees is how they will treat your customers. The ultimate success of your business depends on those people who are in direct contact with your customers every day. Have you validated their importance to your business lately? Do it now – and reap the results!

John Madden is an international speaker, trainer, and author. He specializes in customer service, coaching skills, stress management, creative problem solving, and interpersonal skills. You can reach him at 316-689-6932; email: john@LeapDontSleep.com; [web site: www.LeapDontSleep.com](http://www.LeapDontSleep.com)