



## **The Nicest Way to Build Your Business**

*"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."*

It's interesting to see how many small businesses try as soon as possible to follow the example of some large corporations to build an impersonal "corporate image."

People actually prefer to do business with people, not institutions. The last time you called an organization with a problem, weren't you frustrated and didn't you experience emotional pain while "going through voice mail hell" or being transferred until you got connected with a person who could solve your problem? Corporate leaders with good marketing sense understood this.

When we think of Hewlett Packard, we think of Bill and Dave. Lee Iacocca rebuilt Chrysler largely by being the corporate spokesperson in commercials. No advertising has been more successful for Wendy's than Dave Thomas telling us about his latest fast food offering. According to John Sculley, former president of Apple Computer, it requires 16 times the investment for an existing customer to replace the profits of one who is lost.

Keeping existing customers is a key to running a successful business.

### **Why we lose customers?**

According to a study conducted by the Technical Assistance Research Project in Washington D.C., 3% leave for convenience, 9% because of a relationship, 15% because of product, price or delivery problems, and 5% for other miscellaneous reasons.

That leaves 68% for the most significant reason: perceived indifference. Customers want to feel important and appreciated. A key to build customer loyalty is to build a relationship with customers/clients/patients where they feel important and appreciated!

In any business, but especially a business where there is contact with a customer and a representative of the company either in person or on the telephone, the best way I know to cement that relationship is through personal notes - thank you notes!

Personalize thank you notes by hand addressing the envelope and using a real postage stamp. A hand-written note is best. But if your handwriting is terrible, be sure to sign the letter in blue ink.



### **When should you write thank you notes?**

When you are getting started in business or in sales, you should write a note after any contact, including meeting someone at a seminar or when you exchange business cards. Learn to be sincerely appreciative and express that appreciation. If you deal with a problem, apologize personally with a personal note and be sure the problem is resolved as quickly as possible, maybe even sending another note after it's done.

You certainly will want to acknowledge major purchases and referrals with thank you notes. You can sometimes exploit or manipulate people and make a sale. But when you become an "assistant buyer," a friend who helps the customer make transactions in his or her best interest, and express your interest in the customer as a person, you are building a business or a sales career that will provide for you and your family for years to come.