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THE SBRA COMMUNITY CUSTOMER RETENTION — TREAT THEM LIKE A GUEST



**By Gary Seibert, CEO,
Small Business Resource Association**

Have you ever thought about the difference it might make if you were to focus on customer

retention as your primary way of measuring and maintaining your customer base?

I would like to use an example and do some simple math to start this article. Consider, you are a small business owner and you do business in a community of 100,000 people. Half of that population is either too young or too old to use your product or service which would leave 50,000 potential customers. There are 10 other businesses that sell a product similar to yours and they each have an equal share of the market leaving 5,000 customers to buy from you. You typically service 15 customers a day and you are open 6 days a week. This would indicate that you sell to approximately 90 customers a week or a total of 4680 per year. By using this simple example, you can see that if there was no such thing as customer retention, you would run out of clients in slightly over a year, unless you could start stealing some of your competitor's clients. Since I would never encourage someone to start stealing, I am going to focus this article on how to grow your business from within (RETENTION). Then, through your existing customers, watch your business continue to grow from the other 45,000 potential customers being served by your competition. The principles are simple, the application is the challenge. Are you up to it?

First and foremost, I would like to make a substitution. I will no longer use the term "customers" but rather, they will be referred to as "Guests". You see, a customer is someone that just purchases something from you. You do not need to know their name or anything about them. They are just a number on the cash register's daily total. A guest however, is someone special that you prepare for, greet with a smile and make sure they are well taken care of until the time they depart. You get to know them and look forward to a return visit. You know their name and they know yours. Do you remember the TV series CHEERS "where everyone knows your name"? Make your customers feel like Guests and they will no longer feel like customers. They are treated like customers everywhere but you treat them differently. Remember, *your customer doesn't care how much you know until they know how much you care.*

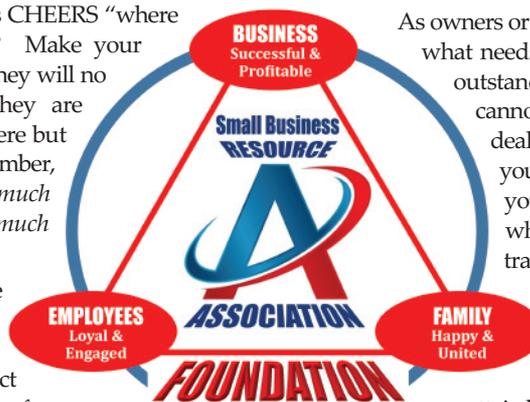
Now that we have a new title for your customer (guest), let's start talking about "guest services" and how that will impact your business. When preparing for a guest coming to your house for dinner, I am sure you have a pretty good understanding of the kind of food and drink they enjoy before starting to prepare the menu. You have also alerted them as to whether the attire was casual or formal, and I am sure you have paid special attention to the appearance of your house, especially the areas they will be exposed to. In other words, you know your guest and you want them to feel comfortable and at ease. The more you

engage with your guest the clearer things become and the easier it will be to determine what is needed to make their experience doing business with you far better than what they get from your competitors. The price of the product may no longer be the sole reason they do business with you, but rather, you treat them with dignity and respect, they feel comfortable with you and your staff and the entire experience is enjoyable. The key is to know and understand your guests so well that your products and service fits them and sells themselves. Know your Guests.

As owners or managers of businesses we know what needs to be done to consistently give outstanding guest service, however, we cannot always be on the floor and dealing with every guest. Therefore, if you are not serving the guest yourself, your job is to be serving someone who is. In other words, your job is to train and supervise your staff to insure, that they believe in and live out your culture of hospitality. Customer satisfaction is a rating that may not be too difficult to attain but having loyal and repeat guests

is a sign that you have created a Brand that people trust and feel comfortable doing business with. Note, you don't earn Loyalty in a day, you earn Loyalty day-by-day.

So, let's go back to our example in the beginning of this article. Using the 5,000 potential guests you started with, just imagine what your business would look like a year later, because you had created a culture of outrageous guest service.



(Continued on page 33)

(Continued from page 32)

Now, almost all of your guests not only became repeat guests but they enjoyed doing business with you so much that they started telling all their friends and family about you. You aren't even considering stealing your competitors customers because all your satisfied guest are encouraging some of those other 45,000 potential guests to do business with you.

Your guest services program has now become your retention program and your retention program has become your referral program. No gimmicks, no magic, no high-pressure sales people and no costly sales and marketing program. Just good common sense. People like to do business with people they like. "Do what you do so well that they will want

to do it again and bring their friends" (Walt Disney).

You can also increase your retention by adding some related products and services to what you already offer. Ray Kroc, the founder of McDonald's once said "It is far more profitable to sell many products to one customer than it is to sell one product to many customers". The guest is already in your establishment buying something from you because of your brand and their loyalty, why not engage with them to find out what else they are buying elsewhere that they would be willing to buy from you?

Now your retention program is not only growing your customer base, it is also growing your product line, based on first-hand information of what your guests want. Pretty simple, it's up to you.

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NATURAL IMMUNITY IN THE HOLIDAY AND WINTER SEASON



By Nick Kleinsmith, Owner of Miach Herbs, Proud SBRA Member

Have you ever wondered why so many people get sick around the holiday and winter season? The answers are more common sense than many know. When it comes to natural immunity many people think to add in things like vitamin C, zinc, garlic, etc. to build up their immune system. Which is great, and we will be talking more about vitamins and herbs you can take to boost your immune system, but have you ever thought about what you need to subtract from your life to boost yourself? Many people don't.

Sometimes the best healing we can receive for our bodies and mind is to remove and not add. One of the biggest areas of subtraction to help and aid our immune system, is to get rid of stress! Often around the holidays we find ourselves stressed out over a plethora of things, running late on getting presents, end of year work stress, having or not having certain relatives or loved ones around. There are many reasons we may find ourselves extra stressed in the holiday and winter season. The important thing for you is to identify what stress you out personally, and remove it from your life or change your attitude towards it. I know, easier said than done, but if you want your physical and mental health to be in good shape, stress should likely be first on your list to be taken care of.

Another big thing people might need to subtract from their life, mainly around the holiday season, is sugar. Sugar in its processed form can have a powerful weakening effect on our immune system. Whenever sick, sugar should be avoided unless it is raw local honey or low sugar fruits like berries and lemons. On the flip side of the subtraction coin is addition. What should we be adding into our diet and life style in winter to help our immune systems stay strong? One of the biggest factors is vitamin D. We call vitamin D the sunshine vitamin because our bodies produce it by sun exposure on our skin. Unfortunately we cannot make vitamin D during fall, winter and most of spring so if your vitamin D levels are low, this can put your immune system at a big disadvantage. Taking vitamin D through supplementation is our only decent option for many of us in the winter. The best form of vitamin D to take is called "D-3", which is a

highly absorbable form of the vitamin. The best way to take vitamin D is after a meal with some form of fat included for proper absorption. Taking it either in breakfast or lunch is the best time to take it.

Some of the best helpers we can add into our immune assisting arsenal are herbs and mushrooms. Some of my favorite herbs to use for boosting our immune system naturally are Echinacea, elderberry, rose hips, olive leaf, any many more. These herbs have great immune boosting properties and are great to taken when you feel a cold coming at the onset, or you know you are run down and more susceptible to getting sick. Herbs can act great as a preventative or help you while in the throes of being sick. Mushrooms like reishi, turkey-tail, and chaga are all wonderful immune system modulators, which means they are good at helping to balance and fortifying our immune system. Mushrooms are often a great option for people with auto-immune disorders because of their balancing effects instead of pure boosting effects you get from a herb.

There are many herbs for us to use in our daily lives, and some works better for you than others. It's important to learn and identify what herbs work best for you specifically. Many would be pleased to learn how many safe and effective herbs are out there for us to use as the wear and tear of life happens. Stay healthy and happy this winter and holiday season. Remember good health and balance is what your body is always seeking, take good care of it and it will take care of you."

Miach Herbs is located at 3451 Saint Peters Road Saint Peters PA, 19470. For more information visit www.miachherbs.com or call 484-706-3412.

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