



## Eight surprisingly simple ways to wow coming back

By Scott Deming

*“In today’s business world it takes more than flashy advertisements and proclamations that you’re the best to reach the top.”*

Today’s world is filled with savvy consumers. They know how to find the best deals. They’re up on all the latest trends. If there’s a hot new product on the market, they don’t want to miss it. Their remarkable blend of exuberance and skepticism leaves many business owners wondering how they can keep a customer’s attention. The short answer is, it takes more than great products to keep your customers coming back. You must also create the ultimate customer experience.

You can’t develop brand loyalty through creative advertising, or by developing a brilliant logo, color scheme, or theme song. It comes from doing for customers what you say you are going to do. It’s that simple. Brands that don’t deliver on their promises lose customers and generate catastrophic, negative word-of-mouth. But brands that consistently exceed what they promise earn customers for life, and generate waves of new customers from positive word-of-mouth.

**1. Be careful what you promise.** Do you promise your customers no waiting in line longer than five minutes and then keep them tapping their feet for 10? Or do you promise 24-hour help service only to make them hear a recorded message instead of a real person on the other end of the line? If you can’t or don’t deliver on your brand promises, you will fail to create loyalty among customers. If you mess up with a customer once, he might give you another chance, but it’s likely that the next time he needs something, he’ll go to one of your competitors. In the reverse scenario, when a company delivers on its promises and even exceeds expectations, it makes the

customer feel valued and appreciated. He feels as if he is a part of your company’s family and culture. It is this delivery that amounts to the ultimate customer experience. The ultimate customer experience creates just the sort of customers you want – ones who bring you more business.

Businesses need to understand that their **VALUES AND SINCERITY ARE THEIR BRAND**, and any marketing or advertising efforts need to be based around that brand identity.

**2. Separate yourself from the pack.**

When businesses get mired in sales quotas, short-term goals, statistics and so forth, the people inside those businesses become robotic. Their eyes are focused not on how the brand is doing, but on what the numbers tell them. Both you and your employees should actually be focused on exceeding your customers’ expectations. You can start by getting rid of impersonal customer service techniques, such as email or automated telephone services. When it comes to your customers, always be proactive.

You must consider what you can do to differentiate your business from all the others that offer the same services or products. The differentiator must be the level of service, the unique experience you offer each of your customers. You have to engender

loyalty in customers so that they will go out of their way to shop with you, regardless of how far out of their way they have to go to get to you.

**3. Realize that perspective is everything.**

To really know how things are going at your company, you’ll have to step out of your own shoes and take a walk in those of your customers and employees. You need to look at your customers and say to yourself, If I were one of my customers right now, what would I love to have from me? Then, do it!

Step two in your “perspective walk” will be taken in your employees’ shoes. You’ll need to gauge their loyalty to the company because loyal employees provide the ultimate experience for customers. When you see what work needs to be done, get started immediately. When you walk in your customers’ and employees’ shoes, you enlarge yourself. Your perspective widens, and so does your concern about what’s important. The benefits you receive from changing your perspective will far exceed those reaped from a narrower focus that includes only the bottom line.

**4. Face the fact that you (and your brand) are probably not as great as you think they are.**

You may or may not be aware of the Lake Wobegon Effect, but it is a phenomenon that many of us and our businesses suffer. It’s the human tendency to think we are better than we actually are. And in business, the effects can be devastating. The problem is when you think your business is the best, you don’t work as hard to keep making it better.

**5. Always be ready to evaluate your brand.**

Constantly ask yourself how you can improve upon the experience you offer your customers. Finally, focus not only

# your customers — and keep them

on what's working, but find aspects of your brand that are not succeeding and do everything you can to improve them.

**6. Understand your company's reach of influence.** Everyone in business is familiar with the adage that a happy customer tells one friend about a good experience while an unhappy customer tells 10 of his friends about a bad experience. It's the customer experience ripple effect, and you want to ensure that your business creates only positive ripples. To do this, you need to focus on actions that show you acknowledge and understand your customers' needs. Doing this will help you create a brand whose promise creates evangelists who are ready to sing your praises near and far.

**7. Don't pretend to be something you're not.** You are your brand, and your brand is you! Everyone has a brand identity, but they don't all understand their own brand correctly, or even know what it is. Branding is not a matter of putting on a persona that others will like. It's not playing a role, putting on a mask, or pretending—all that is superficial, a veneer that covers up the real you. You cannot develop an authentic,

sincere brand—and the brand evangelists that come with it—without understanding what you are all about. You don't want your customers to feel like they are being sold based on a false business persona.

When you are sincere about trying to understand your customers' needs, desires, and what they'd truly love from you, a genuine connection is made that is the foundation of trust between you and your customers. And customers who trust a business keep coming back to that business over and over again.

**8. Know that the easy way isn't always best.** Technology has made communication so much easier. But if you're not careful, too much of a reliance on technology can take you out of direct contact with your customers and as a result erode your brand. Texting, emailing, and instant messaging do not allow you an opportunity to create emotional connections with your customers. Effective use of technology should help you streamline your operations, create new opportunities, reach a broader customer base, and reinforce your carefully developed brand.

Businesses need to understand that their

values and sincerity are their brand, and any marketing or advertising efforts need to be based around that brand identity. Your brand can be created only by you and the relationships you develop. If you want to be successful, you must build a powerful emotional brand. You must stop looking at customers with dollar signs in your eyes and start creating relationships with them. This may seem like an expensive proposition, but believe me, it's less expensive in the long run than neglecting customer relationships. When your customers see that you truly value them and care about the service you can provide them, you'll be able to provide them with their ultimate customer experience and they'll be customers for life.

*Scott Deming delivers high-energy sales, marketing, and customer service presentations to clients across the globe. His latest book, The Brand Who Cried Wolf: Deliver on Your Company's Promise and Create Customers for Life (Wiley, April 2007, ISBN-10: 0-4701271-2-0, ISBN-13: 978-0-4701271-2-4) is available at book stores.*

