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Gail Buckley & Greg Land



If Content Is King. Then The
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**The Importance of
Courting Your Customers**

Plan To Succeed Online

Take The Guess Work Out of Starting & Building a Successful Business Online!

*"Worry about being better; bigger will take care of itself. Think one customer at a time and take care of each one the best way you can."
Gary Comer, founder of Land's End*

Courting Your Customers

Closely related to the method of fulfillment you choose is the level of customer service you can provide. Always bear in mind the retail mantra: *"The customer is always right - even when (s)he is wrong."*

Make no mistake about it, customer trust is the be all and end all for business success. Displeased customers can easily decide to:

- never shop in your store again
- tell others how poorly they were treated and warn them away from your store

And make no mistake about it, the #1 asset in your business is not your products or your talents or your Website design or content. It's not even your Website traffic. Your #1 asset is your customers. Your #1 asset is the number of strong relationships you build with your prospects and customers. And the #1 way you build this relationship is by providing excellent customer service!

In the immortal words of millionaire marketer Dan Kennedy: "Markets come and go. You can find yourself making money hand over fist one year and then a year later find yourself sucking wind. What doesn't go away are customers - unless you neglect them and/or fail to engineer new ways to make money from them."

The Importance Of Great Customer Service & Support

Providing top-notch customer service is an e-commerce imperative. Since customers are so expensive to acquire, to make money existing customers must be treated like gold and retained at whatever cost - since that cost will most likely be lower than new customer acquisition costs.

The way in which you interact with people, both before and after the sale, is extremely important to your bottom-line profits - especially on the Internet. Unlike the "real" world, however, you'll probably never get to meet your online prospects and customers face to face. Even more importantly, they'll never get to meet you. Yet, your goal is to develop long-term relationships with these people, and the only way to bridge this gap is to provide superior - and personalized - customer service.

Customer service is one area in which small, entrepreneurial businesses can outshine larger competitors. Tools such as e-mail, newsletters and interactive forms, coupled with the fact that an online commerce site can provide information on a 24 - 7 basis, give the online business owner a powerful advantage when it comes to retaining customers and building loyalty.

No matter what the medium of communication you use, you need to make each and every prospect and customer feel that you have a sincere desire to help them. Aside from it being "the right thing to do" there are at least four specific benefits you'll realize by providing great customer service - benefits that will ultimately increase your bottom-line profits. Great customer service will:

1. *Convert more prospects into buyers.* Remember, "customer service" does not only apply to the way you handle existing customers - it also applies to the way in which you deal with prospective customers. Responding to all prospect inquiries - in 24 hours or less - with thorough, thoughtful, and appropriate replies is a guaranteed way to increase your lead conversation ratio.

2. *Increase back end sales to existing customers.* As they say, it's a heck of a lot easier - and cheaper - to keep a customer and develop a relationship with them than it is to acquire a new customer. Statistics show that on average, at least one-third of your customers will buy from you again in the future. Of course, this is assuming they were happy with their initial purchase - and that you provide them with great customer service. Over the life of a customer, they could be worth thousands of dollars in profits to your business - don't blow it after one sale.

3. *Encourage favorable word of mouth referrals.* People are going to talk about you and your business no matter what - so why not give them something good to say? While it's true that dissatisfied customers normally talk about you more than satisfied customers will, there are huge profits to be made via positive word of mouth advertising - it's the most powerful form of advertising there is.

4. *Increase the quality and quantity of positive testimonials.* Testimonials are one of the easiest ways to increase your sales, no matter what type of business you're in. And the only way to get the type of raving testimonials that you need is by providing your customers with great products, and great customer service. Prospects want to know how well you'll take care of them after they give you their money, and testimonials that rave about your customer service are invaluable.

Let 'em Know Where to Find You

The very first thing you should do to begin earning the trust of your site visitors or potential customers is to make it easy for them to get in touch with you. Always provide your contact information right up front on your homepage. This indicates that you are proud of the product or service you offer, that you are open to being contacted and, most importantly, that you have nothing to hide.

The more information you can provide up front, the fewer e-mail and phone queries or complaints you'll receive later on. You should include your:

- mailing address
- e-mail address
- telephone number/s: If you have a toll-free number be sure to include it. You might also want to stipulate the best times to reach you.
- fax number/s

It's also helpful to encourage feedback by including an e-mail hyperlink on each of your main site pages, so that your visitors or customers just have to click it if they have a question or comment. You might add a simple mailto link like this:

Questions? Comments? Send e-mail to: <mailto:feedback@websuccessmaker.com> (Please don't click the link unless you actually have some!)

Answer Questions Before They Arise

Another way to provide your visitors/customers with welcome information is to anticipate questions that they might have about your business and include them in a Frequently Asked Questions or FAQ feature on your Website. You should also invite feedback or queries from your visitors and incorporate their suggestions into your FAQ list.

If you're running a retail business, some topics you might consider including in FAQs are:

- Instructions on how your products or services should be used.
- Product guarantees and return policies.
- Sales tax and shipping information.

Each question should have a brief answer providing essential information about your business.

TIP: *Because FAQ pages tend to be pretty lengthy, its a good idea to list the questions all at once at the top of a page using hyperlinks. Your customer or client can then just click on a hyperlinked question and be transported down the page to the answer.*

Be Responsive & Stay in Touch!

You must answer all email inquiries within 24 hours no matter what - end of story. The faster the better. If that means hiring someone to process your email, than so be it. And, if you're smart, you'll provide phone support as well as email support. You'll provide a telephone number where dissatisfied or confused customers can quickly speak to a real person - preferably you! If you're operating from home, install a separate business line to handle these calls.

You must keep in touch with your prospects if you want their business or return business. The best way to do this (and to indulge in a bit of self-promotion) is to start an e-mail newsletter, product update flyer or some other form of regular communication that you send out to a mailing or opt-in list. (You compile your mailing list from prospects who visit your Website and indicate that they want more information by leaving their e-mail addresses.)

You must build up a loyal customer database you can use to introduce or promote new ideas, products or services if you aim to succeed in your business.

Give More Than You Get

If you really want to build up a loyal following you should always try to *give more than you get*. Make sure that the merchandise you are selling is top quality. Your product should not only deliver what you promise it will deliver but go above and beyond expectations, as master marketer Ken Evoy likes to say, it should "over-deliver," (as all his SiteSell products do).

Make sure that any reports, ezines, prizes or other giveaways that you offer in return for your visitors' e-mail addresses are quality products that relate to your business. DON'T giveaway JUNK!! Always try to offer impressive value at a bargain price.

Don't Forget the Guarantee

Another crucial element in gaining the trust and loyalty of your potential customers is to offer money-back or "risk-free" guarantees on all of your products and services. In fact, pro marketer Marlon Sanders recommends giving a "better than risk free guarantee." He says that if you promote your product or service with a 100% money-back guarantee, offering the longest free return you possibly can, your sales will skyrocket because you, the seller, are taking all the risk.

When it comes to customer support, cutting corners is not even an option. If you do all of the above, you will develop a loyal customer following. And once you have this, you will succeed in any business you set your mind to - the hard part will have been done.

TIP: *Once you've built up the trust of you visitors or customers, it doesn't hurt to give them a way to promote or recommend your site to others. If you've done well by them, they may well want to return the favor. One way of doing this is to use a service like [Recommend-It](#), [Let Em Know](#) or [MailBits.com Tell-A-Friend Service](#).*

Automating Your Customer Service

After talking about the importance of superior and personalized customer service and support, it may seem strange to talk about ways of automating it - but it can and needs to be done. As your online business grows you'll find that more and more of your valuable time is spent on customer service related activities, so it's important that you streamline your operations and automate where possible - without sacrificing quality of course.

To make things easier on yourself, there are basically two things you can do: you can reduce the number of requests for customer support to begin with, and then you can automate much of what's left. Here are a few ideas on how to do just that:

1. Reduce the number of customer service requests.

As long as it's well-organized, you can never provide too much information about your products or services on your website. And the more you explain up front, the fewer time-consuming email inquiries you'll get. Just be sure to organize everything in a way that's both easy to use and understand. If there's a lot of information, use a site map or site search engine, so that visitors can quickly locate the information and answers they're looking for.

You'll also want to post detailed FAQs at your web site - answers to Frequently Asked Questions. By providing answers to the most frequently asked questions about your merchandise in a question and answer format, you'll reduce the time spent on answering the same questions over and over. You can't eliminate it, but FAQs help.

You may even want to go one step further and implement a public discussion forum or bulletin board system at your site. Providing answers to common inquiries in a public discussion forum, where they are archived and organized for future visitors to read, can greatly help to reduce the time spent processing individual inquiries.

2. Partially automate as much as you can of what's left.

You can't really automate a lot if someone wants to get in touch with you by phone - other than using an answering machine or an 800 line with pre-scripted messages (both of which are more annoying than helpful). But email is another story. Similar to posting FAQs on your website, you can use contact support email addresses that tag different types of inquiries and then set up autoresponders with pre-formatted messages. Or you can set up stationery templates in your email program that contain answers to the most frequently asked questions.

The last thing you want to do is reply to serious customer service inquiries with pre-written or canned responses, but there are many situations where they can be used effectively without the recipient knowing that you didn't write it just for them, especially if you insert the recipient's name and customize a few lines. (Here's a shortlist of [email list management tools](#) that will automatically personalize and customize all your outgoing mail and do a whole lot more!) Automating as much of the process as possible also allows you to reply in a fraction of the time it would take if you had to sit down and type out each reply individually.

Just don't go overboard with pre-written responses. Make sure that you carefully read through each email you receive. While expediting customer support is important, it's more important that your reply actually answer the question your customer is asking or solve the problem they are having. There is nothing more annoying than receiving an obvious, inappropriate canned response when you are upset and looking for answers.

SIDEBAR: Because so much can be automated, the Internet makes conducting business online a lot easier in many ways, but be careful lest you lose site of the human aspect. Taking the time to address individual issues or pick up the phone and touch base with your prospects or customers is vitally important. Prompt and considerate after-sale follow-up will generate new, repeat and referral sales, increasing the value of your business ten-fold!

10 Key Customer Considerations You May Be Neglecting

1. Do You Know Who Your Customers Are?

It may sound automatic, but many businesses simply don't keep track of who actually buys their products. And, those that do, rarely analyze buying behavior. A customer database is essential. If you don't have one, create one. Start by capturing the basics: customer contact information, product preference and purchase frequency.

2. Have you ranked your customers?

Not all customers are created equal, yet most businesses treat them exactly the same. That's why you need a customer ranking system. Look at those variables that are most relevant to your business -- purchase frequency, revenue, selling costs, referral potential, and so on and score your customers accordingly.

3. Do you know which customers are your most valuable?

The ranking exercise may help explain puzzling disparities in company performance. The 'Why aren't we growing/more profitable/gaining market share when we have more customers than we ever have?' dilemma can be crystal clear when you really look at how each customer is contributing or subtracting from the bottom line.

4. Do you have too many customers?

Are you spending much too much valuable time and resources on retaining too many unprofitable customers? Smart CEOs understand precisely who their target customers are. And, they know how to go after only the right customers. Is there room in your business to be more customer-selective?

5. Which of your customers may be worth firing?

Less can definitely be more when it comes to unprofitable customers. Think about the costs you would NOT incur if certain customers went away. Are some draining the business? The process of raising your customer standards and paring automatically opens space to attract the flow of new, more profitable business.

6. When is the last time you checked customer satisfaction?

If you're not regularly taking the pulse of your customers, they may be sacrificing, rather than being satisfied. 'Customer sacrifice = What the customer wants EXACTLY minus what the customer settles for' say B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, authors of *The Experience Economy*. Check to see if you can shore up the areas of your product or service that may be cracking or settling.

7. Are you spending too much on finding new customers?

Determine all of the costs (people, time and dollars) you incur to grab new customers. Are more company resources focused on customer acquisition vs. customer retention? Consider putting more attention on holding on to the ones you already have. It can have a profound impact on the bottom line -- current customers are 5-10 times LESS expensive to sell to than new customers. And, you can avoid nasty customer defections due to neglect.

8. Are you actively converting first-time buyers to long-term customers?

Check to make sure you don't have a 'leaky bucket' - that you aren't losing mature customers and replacing them with new ones. It takes many new customers to compensate for the loss of just one veteran, according to Frederick Reichheld, author of [The Loyalty Effect](#). And, the bigger the leak, the harder you have to work to keep it full.

9. Are you fortifying relationships with your best customers?

There are 4 strategies to keep great customers. #1) Recognize your Most Valuable Customers (MVCs) with special treatment (perks, MVC Club, unique services), #2) Reward loyal buyers, i.e. frequent buyer programs, #3) Deliver Consistent Product Quality and Satisfaction, and #4) Customize Product/Service For Individual Customers - the ultimate way to keep customers loyal longer is to spend more time catering more to their individual tastes. What can you do to better personalize each customer's experience with you?

10. Are you earning customer loyalty?

Strategic CEOs treat customers like assets and do everything they can to invest and safe keep them, engineering their entire company (not just the customer service dept.) around customer loyalty -- manufacturing, pricing, sales incentives, and all operations inside and out are built for lifetime customers.

Related Resources You Can Use

The first and most important thing you need to acquire in order to succeed in any business is... knowledge. If you are really serious about succeeding in a business... if you want to avoid the common traps and mistakes... **it is absolutely necessary that you acquire the right knowledge.**

You have started your journey in the right direction with this report but, as every wise man knows, the pursuit of knowledge is not finite. If you're going to be conducting any type of business online, any investment that adds to your store of knowledge on the subject is a wise one. Below I've listed some additional resources on this subject you might want to look into.

The most successful entrepreneurs, who report the best results, tell us they got even greater performance from their marketing efforts by combining the tips that they got from us with the cutting edge tools and more in depth information on this specific topic provided by many of the Internet's most experienced and established marketers in the resources listed below.

And because I want that for you also, I'm delighted to let you know about them, so you also can try them out - absolutely risk free! I want to give you every chance at the best outcome from your online marketing. That is why I'm inviting you to at least take a look at them. If they make a difference, keep them. If they don't, just send them back for a full, no-questions-asked refund.

At the very least I would like you to accept **our free gift** of our **Doing Business Online? Portfolio**.

Click the link below to download this mighty pdf publication right now for FREE!



[Doing Business Online](#)

Actually, this is just one of 12 completely customizable, lead and income generating, professionally created, **PDF Perpetual Profit Portfolios**, all of which are jam-packed with solid, usable valuable information that you can lay your hands at our <http://www.websuccessmastery.com> site. If you're looking for a way to make multi-stream earning effortless, to make all the money you want *without selling a thing*, why not pay us a visit when you finish up here. I guarantee you won't regret it!

Now on to those resources...

[WorldProfit Premium Membership](#) (Click the link for the "Amazing Success System" at the bottom of the page.)

Worldprofit.com
Your Internet Business Specialists

As A [WorldProfit](#) Premium Member, you get to offer folks just what their looking for, comprehensive training on exactly how to profit online. The DIFFERENCE is, this training takes a MULTITUDE of forms. You are not just giving people an eBook or printed course or taped seminar to listen to, you are giving them literally EVERYTHING they need to succeed online, including a complete, custom designed website AND the leads they need to profit from it! Your premium membership from this well established company, which has been in the success training business since 1994, includes the the following:

- 4 Yearly Conferences With Renowned Internet Experts (\$799.80 retail value.)
- HUNDREDS of LIVE webcasts on specific online business success subjects taught by top Internet and business experts in dozens of fields.
- Complete Archive Of All Worldprofit Newsletters.
- Thousands Of Online Success Reports & Articles From Hundreds Of Internet Experts.
- Huge Selection Of Ebooks.
- Incredible "21 Days To Online Profit" Course that teaches you you everything need to know to make a killing online.
- Worldprofit Dealership. So you can sell this package and all it entails to others and keep a substantial share of the profits!

Millions of people have never made a dime online. If you're one of them, your days of online failure are at an end. Because their [Premium Membership](#) virtually sells itself (there is nothing like it in the entire world after all), you'll soon experience the thrill of using the Internet to make easy, extra money working part-time at home.

[Click here for more information about this one of a kind home business success package](#)

(At the bottom of the page you land on you will see the graphic note: "Are you HUNGRY for money? Then work personally with internationally known marketer Dr. Jeffrey Lant. Click the link for the 'Amazing success system!'")

[Internet Marketing Protege Program](#) by Terry Dean & Marty Fiegl



How many \$3,000+ per month income streams do you want?

Now YOU can quickly and easily set-up an unlimited number of fully automated Internet businesses in 42 days or less. And each one can crank out \$3,000 or more per month for the rest of your life. It's simple... once you know the system. And if anyone can teach it to you it's someone who has been there and done that successfully for himself and his numerous clients to the tune of millions of dollars each year, like Terry Dean.

And now Terry's giving up all his secrets on just how he's become so successful so that others can learn by his example (without having to go through all the costly trial and error). Now you can eliminate the guessing and the information overload with this [Internet Marketing ABC method](#). Just do step A. Then do step B. Then do step C. Money comes in. It's as simple as that. It doesn't matter what the market is. It doesn't matter who you are. This SYSTEM is one that's been proven to work - over and over. It teaches what you REALLY NEED to know to do TODAY, tomorrow, and the next day to REALLY succeed online.

[Secrets My Mom Never Told Me About Internet Marketing](#) by James Maduk

A Step-By-Step, Paint-By-Number Reference Guide That Teaches Anyone of Any Age How To Be Successful Selling Online... No Matter What Kind of Products or Services You Sell!

"Secrets My Mom Never Told Me About Internet Marketing Is Exactly Like A Home Depot For Marketers... Inside You'll Find Everything You'll Need To Build Your Online Business and More." This ultimate Internet Marketing guide contains over 350 pages, broken up into 35 chapters. It includes real examples and the "how-to" information you're looking for. Plus... **James has included all of his Virtual Classroom Videos.** You get an astounding 85 hours of Video and Audio Training (that's a whopping 414 individual multimedia training sessions)!

This is the BEST book I have read on the total online marketing picture since Ken Evoy's famous "Make Your Site Sell" came out years ago. In my opinion it is superior to even that 'classic' book. " -- Ed Osworth - Editor, The Tip Sheet and Resale Rights.com



[The Web Business Operations Manual](#) by Marlon Sanders

With this CD and manual Marlon's effectively cloned his top notch, crackerjack, customer service person, Lisa. Lisa follows a systematic routine every day. So one month, he had her document everything she did during the day. Step-by-step, the exact methods and procedures she follows to run Marlon's business, wear many hats, and most importantly - free up his time to work on more important things like marketing and new product development.

The manual gives you screen captures of all the important tasks and functions she performs, so it's easy for you to learn the correct, proven procedures. You want to own your business, not have it own you. This manual allows you to do just that - it's your virtual passport to liberation.

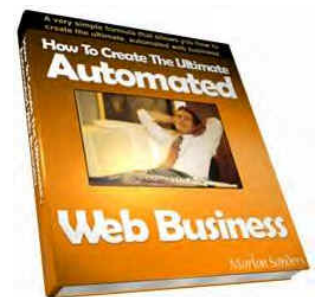


[How to Create the Ultimate Automated Web Business](#) by Marlon Sanders

Sanders Revised & Updated for 2003! NOW AVAILABLE ON CD-ROM



This manual and CD are about one thing and one thing only - how to successfully automate every aspect of your e-business and free up your time to concentrate on other important things. Ask yourself - does your web business run itself or does it run YOU? If you answer the latter, then this book is a must read! Marlon Sanders will show exactly how you can automate virtually every aspect of your web business.



This report is brought to you by **The WOW Corp. Series of Sites**

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