



PowerGrowth™ Tip

Surprise Your Customers and They'll Reward You with Their Loyalty, Repeat Business and a Steady Stream of Referrals

By Michael Bitter

One of the fastest and least expensive ways to increase your customer base is to keep more of the customers you already have--longer. It is also one of the best ways to increase profitability.

One of the best ways to build loyalty, increase repeat business, and generate referrals is to continually find new ways to let your customers know how much they are appreciated. And, one of the best ways to do that is to surprise them. Here is one example of how one of the best in the loyalty business surprised me a few years ago. It's a great story, and definitely worth the read...

A few months after 9-11, my wife and I were on a Southwest Airlines flight to San Diego for a much needed vacation. The airlines were just beginning to recover following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Anxiety was still pretty high among the few brave passengers who were returning to the skies.

We had made it through the increased security screening and had finally made it to our seats, along with 100 or so other passengers. Just after the door was closed, before the plane was pushed back from the gate, and just prior to the short "safety class", a stern sounding announcement was made by one of the flight attendants, "Passengers William and Mary Smith--is there a passenger William or a passenger Mary Smith on board? Could you please raise your hand?"

You could have cut the air with a knife. The plane grew suddenly silent. You could literally "feel" the tension and nervousness. Sheepishly, a young couple raised their hand. Everyone turned to see what was going on. One of the flight attendants nearly sprinted to the location of the couple. Just before the flight attendant arrived at the couple's seats near the back of the plane, he produced and began to blow a New Year's Eve style noise maker, and throw confetti ribbons.

Simultaneously with the display and noise, another flight attendant made this announcement, "We understand that William and Mary are on their way to their honeymoon, and we wanted to wish them a long and happy life together! Congratulations, Mr. and Mrs. Smith! We have a little gift for you---a bottle of champagne!"

Immediately the plane erupted in applause. Inter mingled with the applause, oohs and aahs and comments such as "how cool is that!", "that's so nice"... You get the picture. The mood of the whole plane changed almost instantly.

So, here are a couple of questions:

Do you think that couple will remember their Southwest flight? Do you think they might choose to fly with Southwest in the future? Do you think they might tell others about their experience?

How do you think the rest of the passengers felt about Southwest? Do you think *they* will remember this experience? Do you think *they* might choose to fly with Southwest in the future? Do you think *they* might tell others?

My wife and I certainly remembered it. To this day, we fly Southwest whenever we can. And, that's not all. I have told this story to hundreds of people in the past few years to illustrate how to build loyalty, and it has influenced many more people.

What did this little "surprise" cost the airline? About \$5. How much did it buy them? It's nearly incalculable.

If you want to build loyalty, find ways to "surprise" your customers and let them know how much they and their business are appreciated. Make it part of your retention strategy. If you do this, your customers will definitely thank you for it with their loyalty, repeat business, and referrals.

More Information

Want to learn more about this topic and other retention and loyalty building techniques?

Attend a **PowerGrowth™ Boot Camp**. (www.bizresults.net/bootcamp.htm)

- Learn **10 high-impact, low cost ways to "surprise" your customers**.
- Learn how to follow a **proven, step by step system to transform your business** into a faster growing, more profitable, more self reliant business.
- Learn **the top 20 success secrets, concepts, and techniques used by some of the most successful small businesses**---and learn how to apply them in your business.
- Learn **50+ specific ways to: increase your customer base and retain them longer, increase sales and referrals** from your new and existing customers, and **increase profits** from every sale.

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Bitter has over 30 years of corporate and small business development experience. He has successfully built, run, and sold his own small business, and has helped many other business owners do the same, by teaching them business growth and profitability fundamentals, and how to use his PowerGrowth™ Business Development System, a step by step business development system he developed to help small business and professional service firm owners increase their customer base, increase sales, increase referrals, and increase profits.