

The YEBDC Small Business Information Column

by Sue Gingerich, Business Advisor

"Building an Emotional Connection to Customers Helps Gain Their Loyalty"

When you think of cinnamon and nutmeg what comes to mind? When you think of fine wine and candlelight, what comes to mind? Romance -- fine dining -- a celebration? When you are reminded of these things it most likely conjures up a particular image in your mind. Along with these images often comes some feelings -- some emotions. You are then connected to a memory. Hopefully, pleasant. Business would do well to remember this theory. When trying to reach -- "communicate" with customers, businesses must remember the impact of images and emotions. It is through these things that businesses can become connected to their customers. The stronger and more pleasant the emotional connection, the stronger the trust and loyalty gained from the customer.

In order for a business to create an emotional connection to a customer there has to be a sense of identity first. The customer must identify with the business. One of the only ways to achieve this is to give the business a personality. But how in the world do you give a business a personality?

First decide what the business's personality should be. However, to do this you MUST uncover your consumers' personality. Are your customers romantic and adventurous? Or are your customers serious and practical? What are their needs? Wants? Then, write a thorough psychographic customer profile. (Psychographic = lifestyle, attitudes, personality, beliefs) Next: describe your business as if it was a person. The characteristics of your business's personality should be similar to those of your customers. Emotional connection will occur if your business's "personality" parallels the consumers' values and beliefs and then the customers' trust and loyalty will be gained. If your business's personality does not match with those of your customers you will need to reevaluate either, whom you are selling to, or how you are selling to them, or both. Possibly you have been marketing to the wrong customer. OR possibly you are selling to the right customers but in the wrong way.

Examples of businesses who have achieved this type of emotional connection to their customers are Disney and Harley Davidson. The personality of these businesses are so well developed that just thinking of them brings a clear picture of their "personality" to our minds. So well developed are these personalities that they could even be called a lifestyle!, and when we think of these companies we can also see a clear picture of their typical customer.

So, how do they do it? How can your business do it? First, create your business's personality profile. Next communicate it by:

- Using advertising and promotions that clearly and consistently communicate the desired personality.
- Hiring and developing staff who believe in and project this personality.
- Selling products and services that are consistent with this personality.
- Creating an atmosphere for the business that is consistent with the personality profile.
- Designing the layout of the business's selling or public areas to match the personality profile.

By revealing your business's personality to the customer you have made your emotional connection. Now the trust and loyalty can start to grow. And once trust and loyalty grows, so will your business!

If you have a small business and have a question or problem that you think The YEBDC could help you with please call or write to: The Yellowhead East Business Development Corporation, Box 249, Sangudo, Alberta, T0E 2A0
1-800-556-0328 or 1-780-785-2900, e mail: yebdc@yebdc.ab.ca, or access our Website at:
www.yebdc.ab.ca

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