

Eight Steps to Guarantee Repeat Business



By Richard Shapiro, Founder and President, [The Center For Client Retention](#)

The second decade of the 21st century is witnessing a convergence of forces moving customer loyalty to the edge of extinction. Customers are empowered by increasing control over the retail process, as the digital, global marketplace delivers ever greater choice and saves them time, money, and hassle. The challenge for companies and [brands](#) across all service categories and channels today, from ecommerce, contact centers and brick-and-mortar, is to engender loyalty – but the loyal customer is an endangered species.

Consumer-facing brands have embraced technology as the answer high-tech approaches to attracting and keeping customers aren't living up to their promise. Although technology can help with agility and service in general it is not enough today to sustain long-term relationships and loyalty among consumers who have so much choice and increased control in the selection and buying process.

So is there a “secret sauce” to create loyalty and keep your customers coming back for more? The answer is yes! Through years of research with Fortune 500 and 100 companies to mom and pop stores, I constructed a formula for engendering loyalty that definitely impacts the bottom line. **The eight steps are:**

1. Make Me Feel Welcome
2. Give Me Your Full Attention
3. Answer More Than My Question
4. Know Your Stuff
5. Don't Tell Me No
6. Invite Me to Return
7. Show Me I Matter
8. Surprise Me In Good Ways

The steps are a dynamic roadmap for any company or organization to follow in order to create loyalty in the age of the empowered consumer. [Brand culture](#) must be infused with a “people first” approach. The steps are a strategy to achieve a personalized, welcoming, and nurturing customer experience that begins with an initial transaction and is continuously and authentically reaffirmed.

There is an antidote to the [“Switching Economy.”](#) Companies and their employees must have a mindset around continuous care, responsiveness, and involvement that mirrors the dynamic of an individual’s closest personal relationships. The eight steps are a proven approach to create loyalty and generate a higher percentage of repeat customers.

Think about the customer relationship as a romance. It starts with a date – a single transaction. If you want the relationship to continue, there must be a next step. How many of you have had the experience of a great first encounter without any follow-up? What you really wanted at the end of the first coffee, dinner or walk in the park, was for your date to say, “I enjoyed meeting you and spending some time. Let’s do it again.” If you don’t hear those words, there is disappointment and no connection. In a retail setting, how easy is it for an associate to express to a customer that it was a pleasure to serve him or her and invite that customer to return and give the customer contact info and hours....steps three and six.

Businesses need an edge in this competitive marketplace. The eight steps provide the tools to think outside the box. The technique to on-board new customers so they return and become loyal customers is the foundation to create repeat business. Customers want a human-to-human connection. Follow the road map and determine if the steps affect your bottom line.

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