

# It's All In The Attitude

## Elements of Relationship Marketing

— by Andrea Nierenberg

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Aristotle said, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an act, but a habit."

In network marketing, part of this habit needs to include having an ongoing positive attitude toward your business associates and customers. They assume you'll give them a great big "thank you" after they join your business or buy your product. However, do you keep that attitude of gratitude throughout the relationship, in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health?

As you work with others in our downline or network, you need to help them internalize a sense of loyalty to their customers, a loyalty that comes from relationship marketing. It gives your team a positive attitude that can get them through most situations—no matter how challenging.

Here are some simple tactics that will allow you to develop a consistent positive attitude and build loyalty with customers as well as team members.

1. Go beyond "surface" information. People like talking to people they know beyond the required information. During calls or meetings, find out customers' hobbies, names of family members, likes and dislikes, and birthdays. Knowing this information can turn business contacts into friends that you truly care about. When it's a special day for them, make sure you remember.
2. Feel comfortable with casual calls. Think of reasons to call customers with new information and ideas, unrelated to selling or marketing, just to stay in contact. Good friends always enjoy hearing from each other, even if it's just to say hello. An attitude of informal interactions is a major building block in customer relationships. You'll know it's working when customers start calling you and sharing the joy of a new baby, an engagement or a promotion.
3. Prove dependability. Too many people fall short in this area. Make sure to keep promises and honor guarantees. Customers love to hear these magic sentences: "I'll take full responsibility for that," and, "Consider it done." Faithful salespeople yield faithful customers.
4. Serve, serve, serve. Put customers' needs before anything else. Perhaps your customers rely on your product or service after normal business hours. Therefore, give them your home number and pager. This is like giving them an insurance policy: it's unlikely they will ever use it, but it's reassuring.
5. Give thanks for bad news. We usually celebrate successful deals and let our clients know how much their business means to us. However, what happens when we lose an order to a competitor, or the client's cash flow limits their buying power? Do we say, "Too bad, let's move on to where the money is?" In my business, like most businesses, not every proposal provides me with new income. Even with the

rejections, I show appreciation by sending a note of thanks for their consideration. This has resulted in unexpected business later.

6. Avoid "dark corners." It's been said that ugly things grow in dark corners. If something is going wrong, don't wait until the last minute to inform customers. Timeliness is everything. Often we delay in giving people bad news, which only makes matter worse. When trouble appears, shed some light on the problem before it starts breeding anxiety and blame. Even if there is no immediate solution available, by letting the customer know that every effort is being made, you're keeping the relationship open and honest.

7. You gotta have heart. Selling is done with both the head and the heart. There is an emotional component to the process of doing business. Keep other people's feelings in mind. Customers may wonder, "Is this the best decision for my family?" or "This seems like a good investment now, but how will it affect my future?" When customers buy from us, we need to remember it may not always simply be a business decision. Our product or service might even cost more than a competitor's; it's the relationships we build with our customers that keep us in their good graces.

8. Think and say thanks. Remember to thank people for what they do that helps your life. In research I've conducted in my seminars with salespeople, I've asked, "Do you send out thank-you notes to your clients?" and "How many of you receive notes from clients or business associates?" The response indicates that few people take this practice seriously. As a follow-up, I ask, "When you have received notes of appreciation, how does that make you feel?"

In building relationships with our customers, we have many opportunities to exemplify a consistent positive attitude by sending them a handwritten note. Yes, handwritten. In today's fast-paced, high-tech world, it's important to keep the personal touch. I'm talking about short notes that communicate a thoughtfulness that cannot be duplicated with any other correspondence. This is one of the key secrets of my success with relationship marketing.

To maximize the potential of this correspondence, I suggest you use what I call the "power of three." Take fifteen minutes at the beginning or end of each day and write three cards or notes. Send one to a prospect with whom you're trying to start a relationship, one to a client just to say hello, and one to a business partner to say thanks. You can also include an article they may find of interest. By the end of the week, you'll have made fifteen goodwill contacts; by the end of the year the total will be 750. Think of the business seeds you'll have planted. Some will definitely germinate into additional business.

We sometimes forget that the people we work with or meet in our profession can be very helpful in building our business. Remember to nurture these relationships and expect to reap a whole new harvest.