



You DON'T Want Every New Customer You Can Get

By John Daulton

What?

I can hardly believe I just wrote that headline for this article. Everyone probably thinks I'm crazy now. But, I can prove why it's true. Hear me out.

Everyone with a dollar in his or her hand is a prospective customer. Everyone. Which means that if you say you want every customer you can get, you are saying that all customers are the same. That is a very nice idea, and it's very politically correct, but the truth of the matter is: they aren't. Not all customers are the same. Here's what is the same: money.

The dollar in my pocket is the same as the dollar in your pocket and the one in that woman's purse and in the money clip of the guy across the street. All dollars are the same. But not all customers are. And money doesn't spend itself.

One customer might have more money than another, but the customer with less money might actually spend more of that money on his or her car BECAUSE he or she may have less money. Sound impossible? The thought of missing work and losing a job might be more important to that customer than almost anything else, so he or she will be the most meticulous with vehicle maintenance, thus the customer with less money can actually spend more over time.

Another example: two men, both middle aged, both married, both have kids, both make \$45,000 a year. On the surface, these two guys might seem to have pretty similar customer traits: same age, same income, same family status. But what if one of them is a total cheapskate, a bargain hunter? He's the kind of guy who likes to prove how clever he is by always getting "the best deal." He'll spend two hours at night online, searching for the best deals before

*Knowing where to find the information and how to use it – That's the secret of success. —Albert Einstein**

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Keep Up Your End of the Conversation *By Erin Wright*

Starting a business, and keeping it relevant and visible for years requires business owners to develop an ongoing conversation with both their current and new customers. You've got face-to-face interactions, phone calls, emails, letters, postcards – a ton of ways to build that trust through a consistent conversation. That "conversation" has moved online in the last few years, with more and more online business listings, and search engines clamoring for relevant and interesting content. A one-way conversation is no fun for anyone. Just as customers don't want to be talked to, businesses don't want to be talked about. (Unless it's all stunning, glowing comments.) It's time for your participation to keep up your end of the conversation and stay visible and relevant in the online "community". Trust me, you'll be much happier with the results if you participate.

Case in point: hop on Google and search for your shop. Does your website listing come up at the top of the stack, or is it buried somewhere below the online directory listings? Do you stumble upon customer comments and feedback that you've never seen? Is it good? Is it bad? Is no one talking about your shop? How much conversation is there and how much of it is being guided and driven by YOU?

CustomerLink has some great new tools coming out that can help you keep up your end of the conversation if you don't know where to start, or that can help improve the value and content of your existing participation if you have already begun. smrt 2.0 has three major "conversation starters:" Automated Reviews, Facebook and Twitter feeds and an Online Scorecard that gives you an impartial score of how things are working. Each of these pieces is created with the busy shop owner in mind: we automate review gathering from your current customers and use the information to feed your review site, pass it along to Facebook and Twitter, and get the conversation going. New local area customers will find your customer reviews through their search engines, and the search engines will happily promote your listings higher and higher in the results because you're presenting fresh, objective content on a regular basis. Same thing goes for Facebook and Twitter. Keep in touch with your customers in a whole new way.

See what we're doing to keep up the conversation with our customers on Facebook & Twitter!

getting his service done. He would rather go to three different shops to get his serpentine belt, his oil change and his brake job done because he can save eight bucks on the belt at the big corporate chain shop down the street, he can get the oil change at the quick lube near his work for three dollars less than your shop or the corporate store, and you happened to have placed a brake service coupon in the paper last weekend, so he's coming to you only for the discounted brakes. Worse, when it turns out he needs a rotor, he's the kind of guy who will try to go buy it from the parts store himself or, better yet, get one from the wrecking yard, and have you put it on.

As much as it might seem like "get every customer you can get" is a good idea, in my opinion, that last guy isn't that great of a customer. I mean, it's fine: if he shows up, he shows up; maybe you do it for him, maybe you run him off, but why in the name of all things reasonable would you want to spend money marketing to a guy like that? Seriously. Even if a postcard only costs two cents to send, would you really want to mail anything to that guy? What if you could spend that two cents and mail that same postcard to a customer proven to be the type of consumer who tends to be loyal, the kind of customer who is uncomfortable finding new shops and, if he

DOES find one he trusts, would rather just go there and not have to worry about that part of his life anymore?

Unless you have an unlimited budget for marketing and you can spend money with no concern for what kind of customers you are marketing to, the truth is: you don't want "every" customer you can get. Mailing to the cheapskate is a waste of money. What you REALLY want is every GOOD customer you can get. That's different.

And we can do that for you with a smrt™ New Customer Finder campaign. We know it's not the fanciest name in the world, but we like the name because it tells you exactly what it does. It finds new customers for you. And, better yet, it finds GOOD customers for you. We know who the good customers are based on the smrt Consumer Segment data and the data from your shop's customer records. We know who comes in more, who spends more, and who responds better to mail you send.

So if you think your shop could use a few NEW customers, you now have a way to go after the BEST new customers you can get. Give us a call if you are interested in starting a smrt New Customer Finder program. We'll be happy to explain how it works. Get every GOOD customer you can get!



Three Tips for Getting the Most out of Your "New Customer Finder" Campaign

When you start a smrt New Customer Finder campaign to get new customers, you want to make sure you get and keep them once they call or come in. Based on conversations we have had with shops running programs, here are a few tips we want to share.

1. Tidy Up

First impressions are everything when it comes to new customers. When they pull up to a business all of their senses are working. They are looking at how clean the parking lot is, how clean the windows are, how the landscape is kept up, and anything else they can see (or smell) to determine if they are at a place where they want to do business. They do the same thing with the waiting room and counter area. Is the coffee service presentable or does it look pretty messy? How about the restrooms? That sort of thing. First impressions are important, so make sure how your shop looks sends the message to your new customers that you want it to.

2. Do Good Phone

The phone is absolutely essential to a good New Customer Finder program. Everyone in the shop who answers the phone has to be on their A-Game when they answer the phone, every single time they pick up. Everyone in the shop needs to know what the offer is, be excited about the offer, and be enthusiastic about getting the customer in for it at the customer's earliest convenience. It has to be about the customer and it has to be high energy.

3. Tell Your Crew

Everyone in the shop needs to understand the offer, not just the folks working the counters and the phones. Your techs should know about the offer and understand the purpose for the offer

you are making. Sometimes, tech commission programs are at odds with the offers shops want to make. A free oil change or a free brake reline or any deep discount service can cause friction in the back shop. Make sure as a shop owner you are aware of this, and take steps to make sure that this problem is fixed before it comes up. If you can accommodate the commission issue, that's obviously optimal, but for certain make sure your techs and service manager know WHY the offer you are making is as excellent as it is. If they understand the reason for it, they will be less likely to let grumpy discount-averse attitudes affect the experience your new VIP customer has at your shop.

The Bottom Line

A new customer that comes in from a smrt New Customer Finder program is a highly targeted, hand-picked consumer with the highest probability of being a great, long-term customer for you. But they must have a positive experience when they come to your shop, so everyone has to be on board.

We recommend having a shop meeting before your postcards hit the mail. Sit everyone down, buy some donuts and coffee and go over these three points with them. Let them know how you have targeted the best consumer segments around your shop and, because these customers are such high value, you have made a really, really good offer on your postcard. Let your crew in on your strategy and even solicit their ideas on what your shop can do to make sure these new customers have an experience at your shop that blows their minds. With a little advanced planning and team building like that, your New Customer Finder campaign will have the best possible chance for success.

Reflecting on Holiday Cards – A Personal Experience

By John Daulton

As the guy who does a lot of the writing for CustomerLink, I spend my fair share of time writing for and about our holiday cards. I write about the purpose of them, explaining the value of a customer touch, and how a holiday card creates an emotional response that helps build customer loyalty. I write lots of things like that. As I write, I know all these things are true in my mind, intellectually I "get" it, but as a reflection on the holidays just past, I figured I'd point out that I know it emotionally too.

I spend most of my time in a dark back corner of the CustomerLink building (that's where we writer-types like to be), typing madly away. People around here jokingly refer to me as the cave dweller, which is kind of true. I don't get to interact with customers as often as our sales representatives and account managers do, nor do I really have tons of contact with our vendors, as we have more outgoing folks in the marketing department who do that. But I do, sometimes, touch bases with customers and other marketing partners throughout the year.

Well, this year, I got a Christmas card from one of them. It wasn't a fancy one; it didn't come in a foil-lined envelope or have lots of glitter and lace on the front. It was just a postcard with the message "Happy Holidays from Us to You" on the front and my name along with CustomerLink's address and the like on the back. That's it. Pretty simple, I bet the company that sent it sent out hundreds of them.

To send a letter is a good way to go somewhere without moving anything but your heart. —Phyllis Theroux

But I hung it on my wall.

It made me happy to get it. Not overjoyed, it wasn't me running around the office yelling like Steve Martin did when he got the phonebook in that movie The Jerk, but it was nice to see my name on a card. It was a tiny little dose of pleasant emotions when I got it. So I kept it and stuck it up there to be part of the holiday decorations above my desk.

At home, my wife and I got two Christmas cards from companies we do business with personally as well. Our pest control company and the guy who came and rebuilt our gas barbecue last summer. We've been with the same pest control guy for fifteen years and we have kept him through three moves and his switching companies. I'm not sure when I'll need anything for my barbecue, but I assure you, I'll be calling the guy who sent me that card first. Both of those cards are sitting amongst the skyline of cards upon our mantle, nestled amongst cards from family and friends.

Think about that. Two cards out of about fifteen or twenty are from companies we do business with, and yet those cards made it into a collection of cards from people we (my wife and I) care about. Those two companies got mixed into a very select crowd.

I know the guy who does our pest control is Leroy. The barbecue guy is Pete. The people who sent me the card at work are Deb and Ray. I didn't remember that until I got the card, to be honest. But I know it now. And if I have any say in where we spend advertising dollars this year, I'll remember them then too. That's not a promise to buy. I'm not that easy to lock down. But it is a truth that their company will have an emotional advantage when it comes to how I approach decision-making in the coming year.

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Product News – Time to Order:

Valentine's Day Cards – We know you love having full bays during February, so what better way than the holiday of love as a reason to bring more business in? There's still time to get a Valentine's Day Special mailed to your customers, but you have to act fast.

St. Patrick's Day Cards – Looking for a way to differentiate your business and stay in the forefront of your customers' minds? Consider sending a St. Patrick's Day Card. Your customers will be pleasantly surprised to receive this special card from you!

Spring Special Mailers – Yes, it's still cold and wet in many parts of the country, but spring will be here before you know it! Make sure you get your customers in for post-winter service.

Customer Loyalty and Referral Cards – Identify, reward, and retain your best customers. Earn quality referrals, too! Offer a Customer Loyalty Card or a Customer Referral Card. Your Account Manager can help you select the program and offer that best suits your business goals.

Contact your Account Manager today to discuss these unique offerings.