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First a quote from Mother Teresa of Calcutta: "There is more hunger for love and appreciation in this world than for bread."

Isn't that the truth? We all want love and appreciation. Showing customer appreciation can certainly go a long way in establishing trust and building that everlasting bond we want with our customers.

More dollars are typically spent to obtain new customers than to retain the ones they currently have. An organization's most sizeable asset is its client database. Expending funds on present customers or patients is an intelligent strategy for better returns.

Develop an appreciation program for your existing customers. Reward your finest clients with a gift of gratitude. Thank them for each order they place with you. Give gift cards when they refer a new client to you. Send notes for weddings, births, birthdays and other major events. Rarely do these things occur in business nowadays. Can you recall the last time a salesperson or company did any of this for you? Putting this into your marketing strategy is bound to have a positive outcome.

Here are some suggestions for beginning your own client recognition program.

Make use of Holidays.

For Valentine's Day, a card that says, We Love Our Customers, along with some treat.

Deliver a basket of good tidings at Christmas.

Send baskets with candy at Easter.

Don a costume and drop off special treats for Halloween.

On Memorial Day or 4th of July, give something with a USA theme.

Use the Seasons.

An ice cream treat is great for the summer months.

When the leaves begin to fall, deliver pumpkins or apple cider.

On a cold and snowy day deliver warm donuts and coffee.

Send out flowering seed packets in the spring.

Make use of your vendors and resources.

Offer discounts you work out with your vendors especially for your clients.

Offer educational forums from your vendors.

Who has mastered a skill that would be of interest to your customers?

Education is a great resource.

Send books you think might be helpful to your clients' business or book on a subject you know your customer has an interest in.

Use Invitations.

Invite your customers to lunch.

Invite them to interesting events.

Use Events.

Throw an annual client appreciation bash. Let them invite a friend (maybe a new client for you). Here are some ideas:

Have a Cinema Party-give out popcorn, candy and beverages, show a classic film. Thank your customers with your own movie before the feature film.

Hold a Halloween costume picture day. Who doesn't love pictures? This could be a great chance for an area photographer to get in front of your customers and give you a discount too.

Throw a party at a water park.

Hold an event at a popular local attraction. Be sure to take pictures and follow up with a thank you note and their picture in a special frame.

After all is said and done, our existing customers are all any business has. Make sure you are treating them as valuable as they are to your business.

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