

## **How to be Marketing Focused and Get More Customers**

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Let me ask a question. As marketers of products and services, do we create needs for our products? Did we create the need for Nintendo, designer clothes, satellite TV and cell phones with cameras. No! We don't create needs. Our customers *have* needs. It is our job to understand these needs and use that understanding to create a "want" or preference for our products, services and business. This is the key to good marketing and improving sales.

For example, we didn't create the need for video games. Kids have the need for entertainment, excitement and competition. They can fulfill these needs in a variety of ways. Today, many of them choose to satisfy these needs through videos game. In other words, the games meet needs that exist. If they do a better job of this than other alternatives, then they create a "want" or preference for that product, service or brand.

### **The Marketing Concept**

This philosophy of generating more sales by focusing on customer needs is often referred to as the "marketing concept." This is different from having a "sales emphasis." When our emphasis is simply on sales, we tend to push our products on our customers. Unfortunately, many businesses (maybe yours) still have this emphasis. Despite the lip service they provide of "satisfying the customer," their focus is instead on their products. They think they can create needs for these products through promotion and sell them to (i.e., push them on) their customers. Instead, you want to have a marketing focus. Place your emphasis on understanding your customers' needs and then use this understanding to offer the proper products and communicate with the proper message so your customers will *want* to buy from you.

Now, here's a little secret. It's not just how well you satisfy customer needs that is important. Equally important is the number of needs you satisfy. Think about it. If you were the customer and had the choice between two similar businesses, but one satisfied a lot more of your needs than the other, where would you go? Obviously, you would go to the one that did a good job of satisfying more of your needs. You can do the same for your customers.

### **Two Kinds of Needs**

It's important to realize that your customers' needs fall into two major categories—those that are physical and those that are emotional. As business people, we are more likely to concentrate on the physical needs of our customers. These include such things as comfort, convenience, time saving, product availability, etc. These are reflected though our store hours, product offerings or availability and so on. However, we tend to forget about our customers' emotional needs. These include such things as their need for respect, appreciation, freedom from stress, freedom from worry, entertainment, individuality, and control. These needs can be met through the way we interact with our customers, what we say, how we thank customers for their purchase, the decisions we let our customer make, how we design our store or shopping environment, etc. The more needs we can satisfy, both physical and emotional, the better we will be able to tie customers to our business and the stronger "want" we will create in customers for our business.

### **An Example, Please**

Let's take an example. Many old-style bookstores used to concentrate on . . .well . . .books and displaying them efficiently. There were long rows of shelves with books by category. Lighting was the standard harsh florescent ceiling kind. There was no place to sit because the owner didn't want you to read the book, just buy it ("after all, this is a bookstore, not a library"). In terms of meeting the physical needs of customers (find the book of interest), they were fine. But look what happened when retailers started making bookstores more comfortable with places to sit, pleasant, home-style lighting, coffee shops incorporated where customers could meet with friends or study. The old-style bookstores disappeared because the new ones met more needs, both physical and emotional.

### **It's Your Turn**

Now think about your own business. How can you do a better job of meeting your customers' needs and satisfy more of them? Don't worry. This doesn't have to be an expensive process. Small changes can have a large effect. If you don't know what additional needs to satisfy or how to do a better job of it, just ask your customers. They'll tell you.

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