

Ten Rules for Scoring Customers by A technology digest, Adhanda Enterprises, LLC.

Most businesses recognize that it is a good practice to reward their most valuable and profitable customers. After all, it is one of the core principles of CRM, and it greatly increases the chance that those customers will be loyal. But what happens when the attention paid to higher-paying customers comes at the expense of alienating or even losing your lower-paying customers?

Rene Carayol provides some pointers on this subject in the May issue of the U.K. journal *Director*. She writes, "Someone once asked me if I didn't get tired of the U.S. 'have-a nice day' culture, so obviously insincere. The answer is no. I'd rather be treated with courtesy that I suspect is artificial than with contempt I know to be genuine." Carayol suggests ten rules for scoring customers:

- 1) Set clear goals and objectives. Determine whether the real driver is profit or loyalty. Everything flows from this.
- 2) Build a strong foundation. Start out with great customer service for all, then start differentiating service based on your customers' spending levels.
- 3) Start with honesty and openness. Make sure that those who do not qualify for improved service do not feel penalized.
- 4) Be very clear about the tangible benefits and stay focused. This can be an expensive but extremely lucrative approach. When setting out, think necessary investment, not cost. It is essential to establish the realistic benefits, especially the additional business to be generated from high-end customers.
- 5) Be consistent. If you do provide different levels of service, be sure that they are delivered consistently, or else all your customers will feel let down.
- 6) Be careful when demoting high-value customers. Loyal customers with a history of high spending should only be demoted with great care. Knowing that you, too, are loyal may generate even more loyalty and spending.
- 7) Consider cross-selling opportunities. Good CRM systems can now identify what products and services are likely to be bought by a particular customer. These can provide tremendous sales growth opportunities. The individual customer support teams need to be empowered to make decisions on whether to sell or hold off. Based on this data, they should benefit from this process rather than becoming subject to it. Intuition and judgment are essential ingredients in the overall sales mix.
- 8) Personalize the service wherever possible. There is nothing more powerful than demonstrating that you know and care about the customer on the other end of the phone. This means asking questions based on customer data. Again, good CRM systems are able to provide this information. "How was your trip to Italy?" This can be a very powerful interaction.
- 9) Identify business partners and share data. For example, in the travel industry: airlines, hotels, and rental car companies. In the automotive industry: car manufacturers, roadside assistance organizations, and garages. And so on.
- 10) Grow fast and promote slow. It is hazardous to "ghettoize" your non-special treatment customers. Above all, think customer and not job.