



Client Engagement & Retention 10 Hot Tips & Tools

By: Chris Bachman | March 16, 2017

Do you know your Cost of Client Acquisition? Whether that number is \$10, \$100, or \$1,000, how would you like to be able to acquire more business at just a fraction of that cost? Retaining an existing lead or customer is *5% to 20% percent of the cost* of finding a new customer. So, how much inexpensive business are you letting slip through your fingers?

Every day there are people doing business with you, with many more visiting your website who are just “window shopping.” Every one of these people has, in some form or another, cost you money to get in front of them. And yet, often we shake hands with a customer only to never see them again. Or we watch the traffic to our website and wonder why the conversion numbers are so low.

What if you could engage those visitors to your website? Did you know that nine out of ten website visitors require multiple visits before making a purchase decision? But most won't ever come back to your website or remember where they saw that great offer you had. If you could only start a conversation with them somehow, your odds of eventually doing business with them would likely increase substantially.

And what about the customers who have already done business with you? How do you get them to become return customers, and perhaps even help them help you by sending referrals your way? What if you could build loyalty and have their business over and over again without the recurring costs associated with acquiring a new customer?

There is a plethora of tools, techniques, and tips to help you accomplish the goals of engagement and retention. Following are a few of my favorites to help you get those creative juices flowing. These are presented in short form, but some easy research can get you more details. And at the end of this article are links to the resources, as well as some special offers to help you get started.



Whitepapers

We have all seen these and many of us have acted on them. Expert information is made available to you on a website or via an email, and all you have to do is provide an email address and first name. This is a great win-win plan as the recipient gets some hopefully valuable and relevant information and you get a contact with whom you can now begin engaging. This is how you start a conversation...which can lead to doing business. Whitepapers can range from a single page doc to a 50-page E-Book, typically in a PDF format.

Examples could be: "What to Know Before you Buy..." "Top 10 Tips to hiring an ..." "5 Warning Signs ..." "How to Select Rental Skis..." "Top 10 Money Saving Ideas..." "Free Energy Efficiency Guide" etc., etc.

TIP: Be sure to place your business name and contact information on the document being provided. That way you get a lot more mileage out of it as it is reviewed in the future or shared with others.

"Club" Concept

Offer your customers a membership which provides them with an instant discount, future money-saving specials, advance notice of special events or sales, "members only" social hours, etc. The customer now feels special, is encouraged and rewarded for repeat business, and by creating a sense of "belonging," develops a sense of loyalty to your business. You also now have a new contact you can reach out to on a regular basis with "Club News."

News & Tips

An email newsletter or monthly "preferred customer" mailing is a great way to stay in the circle of awareness of a current or potential customer. There is a lot of good advice to be had on the proper design and implementation of email marketing. Considerations include number of topics, types of images, frequency of delivery, and more. Above all, use a mainstream email marketing provider such as Mail Chimp, Constant Contact, or one of many others. We have been using Constant Contact for years, and they not only have an amazing menu of marketing tools, but also a great library of how-to articles.

Coupons

Coupons may seem old school, but they work. Include them in a shopping bag, add to the end of a newsletter, send out as an email of special offerings, or include in the welcome e-mail when someone joins your mailing list. One of the coupon ideas we especially like is offered by Constant Contact. It is a viral coupon program where the recipient gets rewarded with additional discounts for distributing the coupon offer to their friends and family, who in turn use the coupon and are then added to your mailing list.



Free Trials

They work. Many payment portals like PayPal and Stripe support a free trial period, and even if that doesn't fit your situation exactly, there is any number of ways to structure a free trial. They are simple to set up, simple to operate, and they move people who are on the edge of doing business with you into actually doing business. And, as you probably guessed, once in a trial most people opt to remain. And if they don't, you both can move on to a better fit.

Videos

Not only does incorporating video into your website make it more appealing to the search engines, people actually do like watching videos and will think more highly of your business for having viewed them. Video topic ideas could include testimonials, how-to's, see-it-in-action, helpful tips, about us, and...well, you get the idea. There are many more ideas available online about how to use videos. Use them on your website, embedded into your newsletter or email blast, or offer access to them for free or at a cost as a class. A YouTube channel is a great way for many businesses to go.

Sweepstakes & Contests

People love to play games and enter contests almost as much as they love to win. You can create quizzes that teach about your business, or ones which don't but are still fun. You could offer a sweepstakes with a worthwhile prize, perhaps something from your business or which reflects well on your business. The ideas go on and on, and once you get your head into it, creating these can be a lot of fun. A couple of things to keep in mind: there are laws which govern certain types of gaming. The chances are you won't run afoul of these but you need to be aware they are out there. A good article on this is available in the resource area of our site. Another thing to consider is whether you want to cobble together a contest yourself or use one of the services out there to handle it all for you. There are several companies such as RaffleCopter and ViralSweep that offer programs to make it super easy to get started and produce hi-quality presentations.

Resource List

You are pretty much an expert in your field of business, yes? As such you know a slew of tips, resources, and helpful information. Rather than be overly protective with all that knowledge, share it! Create a helpful guide and compile a lot of that information into a useful resource which can be distributed to potential clients via an email signup (whitepaper) and email blast, a link to a page on your website, or simply as a printed piece available at your store. The good will and image you convey as a helpful resource of knowledge will bring you loads more business than you will get by keeping all that knowledge under lock and key.



Loyalty Programs

Loyalty programs are similar in many ways to a club. However, the programs which specifically focus on providing these types of programs offer a lot of personal twists and features, which means you need to sort through several to find which one fits your business best.

Surveys & Polls

Surveys are an excellent way to get a read on how people view things: your business, your services, your staff, our products, etc. Surveys also represent a great way to distribute a coupon as a thank you for participating. And, if someone is not too happy with your service or product, a survey can help you connect with them, right the wrong, and hopefully turn a negative situation into a positive and happy future customer. People like to be asked their opinion; all you have to do is listen.

Polls are another good way to engage people, especially visitors to your website. Add a timely poll to the site, have people register to be notified of the results, and then complete the poll at least once a month. You don't want them to forget that they participated in the poll! Polling apps are available through any number of sources and can be found online. Our favorite? Constant Contact. It is simple, easy to use, and incorporates easily into their other services.

Resources

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