

How to attract your ideal customer

Look at everything as if you were seeing it either for the first or last time

Very few shop owners are in a position of having too many customers. The majority of us have to fight for every customer. Last week I overheard a conversation between ATI Coach Eric Twiggs and a shop owner on attracting your ideal customer. Eric's story began like this:

Several weeks ago I took my car to a local tire retailer to resolve a slow leak. As soon as I arrived at the service counter, it became obvious that "Jeff," the service writer, didn't want my business.

He didn't smile, didn't greet me, but he did say the following: "Sir, I need you to step to the other side of the counter because I'm with a customer." After several minutes it was my turn and I made him aware of my tire situation.

"Sir, I won't be able to get to it today. We're backed up with other work." To which I replied: "But it's 5:55 p.m. and your sign says you close at 7:00!" He became more insistent: "I can't get to it. My guys are loaded up, so there's nothing I can do."

Jeff was clear on what he couldn't

do. What he didn't know was that "Glen," the district manager for the location, and I were friends. I decided this would be a great time to give him a call to catch up.

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I told Glen that I was at his shop and Jeff couldn't look at my tire. He advised me to go back to the counter and give Jeff my phone. The look on Jeff's face was priceless as I handed him my cell and said: "Glen Franklin would like to speak with you!" I don't know what Glen said, but Jeff suddenly became a different person. "Mr. Twiggs, my apologies, I'll have my guys stay late, and we'll get you taken care of!"

His team worked on my car with the speed of a NASCAR pit crew! He treated

me like a VIP. As I left the shop, I wrestled with the following question: What if Jeff treated every customer like they were close friends with his boss?

Here's the big takeaway: You never know who will walk through your doors. The lady with the old car may have new money. That irate fellow you just spoke with may have an Instagram following. The key to attracting your ideal customer is to assume that everyone is a VIP.

This is important because VIPs associate with others who are like them, and studies show that the customer who's "wowed" is three times as likely to refer you as one who's merely satisfied.

Stay with me to learn two specific strategies to help attract your ideal customer.

Tailored recognition

Discretionary effort is that extra level of effort that's not required but can be given by employees if they really want to. In his book, *Bringing Out the Best in People*, Aubrey Daniels reports on an employee engagement survey conducted on a sampling of employees working in small businesses.

Only 23 percent of the participants said they were working to their fullest potential. Forty-four percent of respondents admitted to only doing what was required and nothing more. So what can be done to get your people to go the extra mile?

A tailored recognition program is a great place to start, because you will get more of whatever behavior you reward. If you want to create a culture

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Chris "Chubby" Frederick, CEO

where everyone goes the extra mile, then implement a recognition program that rewards those who do. The key is to tailor the recognition you provide to the interests of your employee.

Is your writer a football fan? Then recognize her raving customer testimonial by giving her tickets to the Ravens game. Is your technician motivated by time off? Surprise him with a day off with pay for staying after hours to help a stranded customer.

Formal CSI program

In a previous article, “The secret to keeping good people” (MotorAge.com/secret), I wrote about the importance of being self-aware, as it relates to keeping good employees. When it comes to providing VIP level service, the shop owner who is self-aware has the ability to look at his shop through the lens of his customer. Having a system in place to get feedback from your customers on their experience is critical.

Do you have a formal CSI (Customer Satisfaction Index) program in place? Many of the shops I work with pay an outside company to contact customers and ask them to rate their experience in several areas. The numbers are averaged to come up with an overall CSI score, which is a key indicator of whether or not your customers are being treated like VIPs.

If you prefer to do it yourself, you can make random CSI calls, or you can also use Survey Monkey to create CSI questions that you email out to your

customers. Generally, the customers who respond without any prompting are either extremely happy or extremely dissatisfied, so offering an incentive will help you to get feedback from those who aren’t in one of the extreme groups.

CSI questions to ask

If you commit to a tailored recognition

and formal CSI program, your people will be motivated to treat your customers as if they were the boss.

If you are interested in creating your own CSI program but don’t know where to start, you should go to www.ationlinetraining.com/2017-07 to receive a list of questions to ask your customers when you or the survey company you choose calls. **TL**

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across North America to drive profits and dreams home to their families. This month's article was written with the help of Coach Eric Twiggs. chubby@autotraining.net