

Every brand is built upon the strength of buyer-seller relationships; that is, your ability to forge a relationship with your customers, to give them a reason to choose you, not your competitor down the street.

Customer satisfaction affects both repeat business (customer retention) and prices. If customers aren't happy, it puts pressure on profit margins and often forces companies to reduce prices or step up sales promotion in order to keep customers ... let alone attract new ones.

Every single thing must be centered on one overriding aim: How do we convince our customers to come back? I learned that if you look after getting repeat business, profit will largely take care of itself.

Despite all efforts to systemize and measure customer satisfaction, it's really very simple: people want to feel valued. We're often so enamored with the mechanics of the transaction that we forget to provide what's needed to build a relationship.

Get out from behind the counter and look at your service from the customer's perspective. The difference between being a customer and waiting on a customer can be amazing. What seems reasonable or even valuable from the perspective of the company is often glaringly wrong from the point of view of the customer.

For example ... If anything matters to people today, it's time. If you're in the restaurant business, you'll likely find that you're serving what I call "CTT" customers: can't cook, too tired, no time. The best service for these customers is invisible service. They want what they want, when they want it, how they want it ... no hassles.

Focus on persuading the customer to return ... by giving them a reason to return. When faced with any business decision, any call on your time or resources, ask, "How will this help bring the customer back?"