



If a guy is racing to finish 40 lawns in one day, would YOU want to be that 40th lawn?

Customers are people first

Some time ago I read that there's not a lot of customer loyalty in the lawn care business.

I just don't buy that.

Our company doesn't lose many customers because we don't treat them like numbers, concentrating too much on volume like some big companies. Proof of this is some of the things we do for customers that might seem a bit out of the ordinary.

Don't be afraid to be different

After the economy took a plunge last year many people lost their jobs, including some of our customers. We've had longtime customers who, when they lost their job, told us they had to cancel our service. We didn't let them. Instead, we offered to continue our service for free until they got another job. We don't do that for all our customers or else we'd go broke. But, for a special few, we will. And you wouldn't believe what kind of loyalty that builds.

Big companies would never service a customer for free, no matter what the circumstances. If you can't pay the bill they let you go. They want sales and growth. They don't think long-term, about how we're all human beings living and working on this earth together.

Another thing that goes a long way in developing customer loyalty is doing some random and unexpected nice things for your customers. One time, a longtime customer asked me to come out and give her some advice on her landscape. I have a special relationship with a local florist and I thought, what the heck, I'm going to bring some roses to her. Needless to say, she was quite surprised. It just made her week.

Be like the milkman

When I was a young boy growing up in Cincinnati, everyone had a milkman. After awhile, our milkman knew everyone in our family, plus the dog and the cat. Do you think my dad would have ever fired him? Heck no. He wasn't just providing us with milk — he knew us and cared about us.

We tell our employees to get to know their customers well, too, and take care of them in any way possible. We know they do a quality job because we pay them a salary so they're happy and comfortable. If we paid them on commission, quality would go out the window. If a guy is racing to finish 40 lawns in one day, would you want to be that 40th lawn?

We have customer appreciation parties where our customers and employees will mingle and further their relationship. If there's a new employee, we'll introduce him to a customer and say, "This is who's going to work on your lawn." This seems to work well. We have one employee who's been with us for seven years named Joe who customers will specifically request by name.

Treat your employees right

Developing loyalty among employees is important, too. When goals aren't achieved, companies want to lay employees off. We've never laid anybody off. As soon as you lay employees off, you lose their loyalty.

Make sure to do special things for employees who've been with you for a long time. Whether it's increasing vacation time or offering some other perk, we always make sure to reward longtime employees so their loyalty stays with us.

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