

## Is Loyalty Dead?: Six Ways to Keep Your Customers Coming Back for More !

November 2010

Page 1 of 4

*Today, competition in the business world is tight. Many business owners feel that their customers are making decisions solely based on the deals they can or can't provide them. Maribeth Kuzmeski says that doesn't have to be the case for your customers. She says by tapping into your customers' emotions and really connecting with them, you can build loyalty that will keep them coming back in good times and bad.*

**Hoboken, NJ** (November 2010)—If you're a business owner in today's less-than-pleasant economy, it may seem that more and more of your clients and customers are opting to cut ties with you in order to cut every ounce of fat out of their budgets. Today, most people are making their business decisions based on the almighty dollar. And there's so much competition out there that your clients can easily find some other business to give them the product or service you provide for a lot less.

Maribeth Kuzmeski says that it has never been more critical than it is in business today to establish strong, genuine connections with clients. Without these connections, your product or service can easily get lost in a sea of noise and similar offerings. However, when you provide better service and support than your competition, your customers won't go anywhere, and those who do will come screaming back.

"You have to create strong emotional connections with your clients that won't quickly be canceled out when they find a better deal somewhere else," says Kuzmeski, author of the new book *...And the Clients Went Wild! How Savvy Professionals Win All the Business They Want* (Wiley, 2010, ISBN: 978-0-470-60176-1, \$24.95, [www.AndTheClientsWentWild.com](http://www.AndTheClientsWentWild.com)).

In *...And the Clients Went Wild!*, Kuzmeski lays out a blueprint for cultivating loyal clients and generating growing sales through a collection of principles and tactics that have proven successful for others. The idea is to trigger a strong emotional connection in the minds of prospects and clients—followed by a response that is so powerful that your loyal clients won't be able to stop talking about you.

"What many business owners don't want to admit is that great companies—big and small—have maintained their loyal customers, even in these hard times," says Kuzmeski. "Loyalty does still exist for companies that have a deep understanding of their customers' wants and needs."

But how do they do it? Read on for Kuzmeski's advice on how you can turn your customers into fans for life:

**Surprise them by always going the extra mile.** People expect great service from luxury companies like the Ritz-Carlton or Rolex. As in, *I always stay at the Ritz-Carlton because the service and comfort they provide is unbelievable. Or, I'll never have another watch that isn't a Rolex.* But they don't always expect great service when they aren't paying top dollar for a company or service. Surprise your clients and customers by always going the extra mile.

"With luxury brands, you pay a lot and you get a lot in return," she says. "That's how it is supposed to be. But you can create the same kind of loyalty to your brand by simply going the extra mile when people might not expect you to. Recently, for example, I was leaving a Holiday Inn and saw that the manager was standing at the door saying good-bye to all of the guests.

He asked me how I enjoyed my stay and whether I stayed at the Holiday Inn a lot. He told me that he really wanted to see me back at his hotel again and offered me a discount on my next stay.

"These were simple gestures, but he took the time to make a personal connection. He made an effort to have meaningful conversations with his guests, and in the process, he managed up other features at the hotel, such as the restaurant. And it didn't cost him a penny to do that. He went out of his way to provide great service. And because I usually don't care where I stay, the next time I need a hotel in that city, I'll go with that manager's Holiday Inn."

**Give them something to talk about.** To get your clients to go wild about you, you have to give them something to talk about. Something that is just a little more exciting than what your competition is doing. Give them a reason and they will keep coming back.

"My 'something to talk about' is often my business card," says Kuzmeski. "Instead of your run-of-the-mill card, my business card more closely resembles an NFL or MLB trading card. It features a picture of me in a football jersey and all of my stats—my weight, height, age, and college alma mater. People absolutely love it. I am constantly asked who designed it for me and whether I can send them more. In fact, just recently, I was in a business meeting, and everyone was passing around their business cards. When I passed out my card, it set off a ten-minute conversation about how unique it is. I guarantee you there are people out there who still remember me because I handed them this one-of-a-kind business card."

**Go after referrals, not new clients.** We all do it. When times get tough, we tend to avoid difficult conversations with clients. But what we should really be doing is getting in front of them and showing that we truly care about our relationships with them.

"I was recently approached by a financial advisor client of mine," says Kuzmeski. "He had gotten new clients only through referrals his entire career, but recently his referrals had dried up. His reaction was that he needed to just go out and find new clients. The truth, of course, is that he needed to get in touch with the clients he had already been working with for years."

"In today's business climate, you have to get out from behind your desk and go see people, even when the conversations might be uncomfortable for you," she adds. "Have breakfast with them. Have a lunch meeting with them. No matter what you do, get in front of them! Your clients might not always like what you tell them, but by showing up for them during tough times, you build their trust and you help them reduce their anxiety. People do business with people they trust, with people who they feel have their backs. And those are the kind of people clients will want to refer to their inner circle."

**Choose high-touch over high-tech.** As things have gotten more automated and technology has taken hold, it is so much easier to choose high-tech communication over high-touch communication. Keep in mind that people aren't buying from a store; they are buying from the salesperson. Be human. Dig for a way to be memorable with your clients.

"So how do you dig deeper with clients?" asks Kuzmeski. "The best way is to pay attention. Acknowledge when a client might be under special circumstances. If you work for an airline and you see a mom traveling by herself with three unruly children, help her out. If you work for a hotel and an especially stressed-out traveler walks up to your counter, give him your 'stressed-out traveler' discount. If you know a client has been taking care of a sick parent or child, ask her how everyone in the family is doing. Keep in mind that even if whatever you do to dig deeper lasts just a few seconds, your client or customer will remember it for much longer."

**Be like family.** Why do you cheer for your favorite sports team? Maybe because you watched the games as a child with your dad or grandmother. Or maybe because attending a game with thousands of other fans is like going to one big family reunion. Think about how you can tap into these feelings to build loyalty with your clients.

"I was raised a Packers fan," says Kuzmeski. "As a little girl, I would sit on my grandmother's lap and watch the games with her. Packers fans are some of the most loyal fans in the world. Win or lose, it's easy to find a Packers fan nearby to either celebrate or commiserate with. I feel good when I cheer for the Packers, so I keep doing it every season, no matter what. I think you see the same feeling surrounding things like Ford trucks or certain cereals such as Cheerios or Frosted Flakes. People buy Ford trucks because it's what their grandfathers did. They eat Cheerios or Frosted Flakes every morning because that's what they ate every morning before school when they were kids.

"You have to create a feeling with people that you are a part of their daily lives. Create an emotional connection so strong that they can't imagine choosing any of your competitors over you. Once you inspire this feeling, you will have a customer for life. One of the keys is to create a memory or attachment point that can be experienced together in close relationships. For instance, make sure your clients bring their grandkids to your client appreciation picnic, offer a free round of golf to newlyweds, or offer a stuffed animal for new parents who have opened up a child's bank savings account."

**Create an experience.** It might sound easier said than done, but if you make customers want to be around you, they'll keep coming back. Many businesses today risk becoming viewed as commodities in the eyes of their customers. Customers end up feeling like they can get that level of service from anyone, so, sure they may come to you sometimes, but they go to your competition just as often. You have to create an experience for your customers that they want to keep repeating.

"A great example of a company that succeeds at creating an experience no matter which store you go to is Ikea," says Kuzmeski. "It is truly an experience any time you go. First of all, no matter when you go the place is crawling with people. People are eating. People are just wandering around. People are buying. And the crazy thing is that rather than be annoyed that there are tons of other people there, you end up feeling like you are part of something really great.

"There are a number of ways to create an experience for your clients. You can put out freshly baked cookies for them. Offer them coffee from the best place in town. Always try to take their calls or make a point to call them back within thirty minutes. Start every meeting with them by asking about their biggest concerns. Provide a postcard about your company after each meeting and ask them to fill it out and send it to one of their friends or family members. The list could go on and on. Just find the experience-maker that works for you and that you can passionately fulfill every day for every client who walks through the door."

"Loyalty did not die with the recession," says Kuzmeski. "In fact, the great thing about client loyalty is that when you really have it, it never dies. Your customers will keep coming back to you in thick and thin. You just have to be willing to put in the work to create the emotional connections with them that turn into unbreakable loyalty. When you do, your company and your bottom line will be better for it."

###

**About the Author:**

Maribeth Kuzmeski, MBA, is the author of five books, including *...And the Clients Went Wild! How Savvy Professionals Win All the Business They Want* (Wiley, 2010, ISBN: 978-0-470-60176-1, \$24.95, [www.AndTheClientsWentWild.com](http://www.AndTheClientsWentWild.com)) and *The Connectors: How the World's Most Successful Businesspeople Build Relationships and Win Clients for Life* (Wiley, 2009, ISBN: 978-0-470-48818-8, \$22.95, [www.TheConnectorsBook.com](http://www.TheConnectorsBook.com)). She is the founder of Red Zone Marketing, LLC, which consults with businesses from entrepreneurial firms to Fortune 500 corporations on strategic marketing planning and business growth. Maribeth has personally consulted with some of the world's most successful CEOs, entrepreneurs, and professionals. An internationally recognized speaker, she shares the tactics that businesspeople use today to create more sustainable business relationships, sales, and marketing successes.

She is an international keynote speaker and regularly speaks to audiences on topics relating to business development, marketing, and sales strategies. She is also a member of Entrepreneurs' Organization (EO) and is a regular media contributor appearing on Fox News, ABC News, WGN-TV, and in publications such as the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, *BusinessWeek*, *Entrepreneur*, and *Forbes*.

Maribeth graduated with a degree in journalism from Syracuse University and has an MBA in marketing from The George Washington University. She lives in the Chicago, Illinois, area with her husband and two teenagers.

**About the Book:**

*...And the Clients Went Wild! How Savvy Professionals Win All the Business They Want* (Wiley, 2010, ISBN: 978-0-470-60176-1, \$24.95, [www.AndTheClientsWentWild.com](http://www.AndTheClientsWentWild.com)) is available at bookstores nationwide, major online booksellers, or directly from the publisher by calling 800-225-5945. In Canada, call 800-567-4797.

**For more information, please visit [www.RedZoneMarketing.com](http://www.RedZoneMarketing.com) and [www.AndTheClientsWentWild.com](http://www.AndTheClientsWentWild.com).**