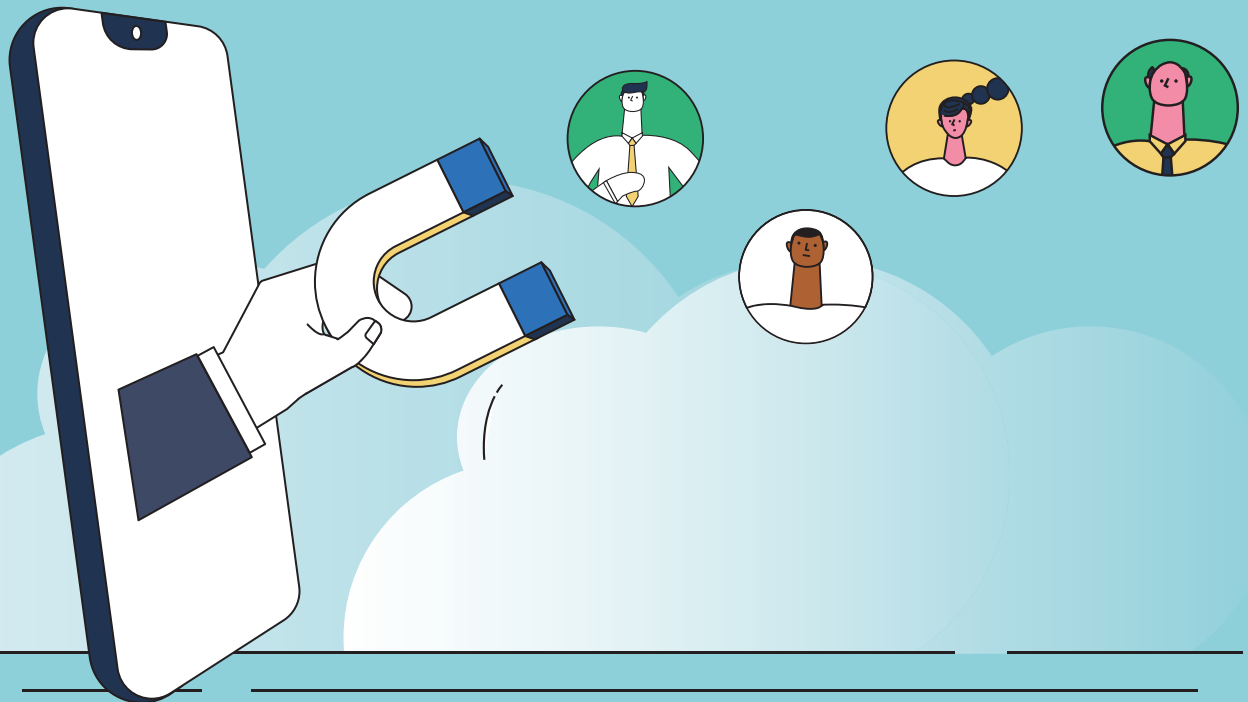


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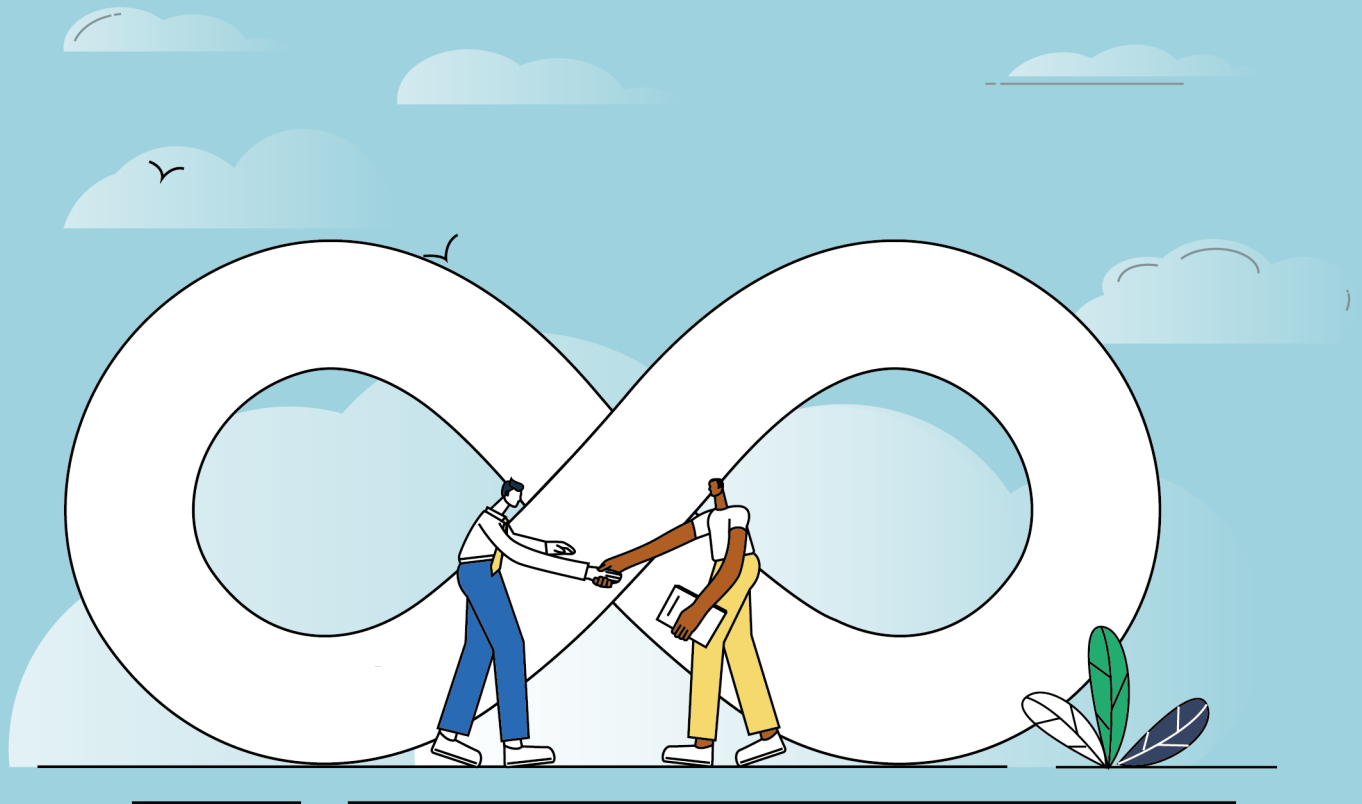
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The Art of Client Retention



The Art of Client Retention



In this challenging economic climate, it is critical that you view repeat customers as strategic to your long-term success. You need to think about client retention as part of your sales and delivery strategy. There are four customer voices that you need to consider when developing your strategy. Listening and responding to these four voices can create trusted relationships that will result in repeat buyers and increase the customer's lifetime value.



Know and Remember Me

Are you aware of how the customer views you as a resource for their needs? When you complete the delivery of a service or product, do you survey the customer on how well the service or product met their needs? Ask questions about what the customer liked or didn't like about the experience of working with your company. Were you easy to engage? Did the pricing reflect the value of what was received? How can you improve in the future?

If you demonstrate that you care, you can create a long-term relationship with your customers. They are more likely to contact you for their future needs, and you will become a reliable resource.

You need to record who your customers are from past sales. This includes their contact information, what services you provided, and any information relevant to the products or services that you sold. You need to demonstrate this knowledge when they contact you. The person who answers the phone should have this information available, greeting the customer by name and remembering the product or service you sold the customer. The greeting would sound something like this:

"Good afternoon, (Insert name). It was (insert date mm/yyyy) when we were last able to help you with (insert product or service). How can we help you today?"

You can enable this with a simple spreadsheet or use a CRM system for small businesses. A number of these systems are sold as Software as a Service (SaaS), which means that they are a subscription service. Suggested vendors include MondayCRM, Pipedrive, and Honeybook, just to name a few. The objective here is to recognize the caller as a past customer so that you can greet them by name. Let them know that you remember the product or service that you sold them. Customers like to be recognized by their suppliers. It means that they are important to you. This contributes to building and maintaining a long-term relationship.

Value My Time

Make it easy to engage with you. The customer has a need, they may be busy or anxious to get it resolved. Value their time whenever you interact with them. Keep your voicemail available. I tried calling a vendor for a home service—his voicemail was always full. If his voicemail is full, how can I request service? But more importantly, how is he treating other customers? Will he be hard to engage with once the work has started? As a result, I deleted his name from my contact list.

If you have a scheduler who answers the phone, ensure that he or she captures all of the information about the product or service. Repeating the same information does not value the customer's time. If they leave you a message, respond the

same day or at least within 24 hours. Being responsive builds trust as you become an easy-to-engage resource who knows what you need and how soon that need will be met.

Another way to value the customer's time is to provide an easy way to request services or a product. This can be done via a form on your website or simply an email, but as with voicemail, you need to respond as quickly as possible, preferably within 24 hours.

I Need Help With My Problem

Demonstrating that you care about the customer's problem can be challenging at times. But this empathic attitude rewards you with an important contribution to customer loyalty. Here is an example. A customer contacts you about a problem and needs your help immediately. You are fully booked and cannot help immediately. Is there a way to provide relief to diminish the impact of the problem? Some call this a workaround. Is there an action that would limit the effect on the customer until you respond?

The other potential response is to check your professional partners that can deliver a solution and recommend them to the customer. While you are giving work to someone else, the customer will always remember that it was you who found a solution. I had a major car repair issue and called a car repair shop that had repaired my car in the past. After describing my problem, they told me that they were

fully booked and couldn't do the repairs now. They then suggested another shop that could do it. They called the other shop and set up an appointment for me. After that I knew I could trust this shop for future problems because they tried to help me.

This builds loyalty and client retention. Another positive aspect is that customers share their buying and service experiences on social media sites such as Yelp, Next Door, and Facebook, potentially expanding your customer base.

Think of Me Even When I Don't Call You

This is all about providing the customer with unsolicited but relevant information. My family orders groceries, meals, and products on the web. The majority of vendors we use will provide us with the status of the order and even confirm the delivery date and time. On Amazon, when you check your order after it has shipped, you can see how many stops are away before the delivery. Instacart will send you text messages on the status of your grocery order. Even Stanley Steemer will send you a picture of the technician and his ETA. For many small companies, this would be over the top, but providing some status information via a text message is worthy of consideration. It means that you are thinking of them and providing some unsolicited but relevant information of value.



Another consideration for this voice of the customer is expanding the scope of your products and services. This concept of “adjacent services” is based on the idea that you can leverage your existing capabilities and resources to expand the products and services that you provide. Couple that with using your knowledge of your customers to target an announcement of the new services you are offering. This is unsolicited but relevant information that can benefit those customers who can use your expanded services.

A novel example of “thinking of me” occurred when our aging dishwasher broke down. We called GE Cares, and a repair technician diagnosed our problem as “too expensive to repair” as the unit was quite old, suggesting we buy a new dishwasher. A week later, I received a discount offer in the mail for a replacement GE dishwasher in the form of a check that I could take to any appliance store selling GE dishwashers. They provided unsolicited and relevant information about how to resolve my problem. You are not GE, but this is a great example of using some creativity to help a customer with an unexpected problem. It points to using closed service tickets to determine if you can help the customer in some way.

Wrapping It Up

While some of these voices address transactional issues, they are at the heart of customer relationship building. Forward-thinking companies have found that if they consider these voices and understand their current customer interactions, they can use this knowledge to improve and create long-lasting relationships that build customer retention and influence customer lifetime value.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I collect information and use customer information?
- Do I harvest that information to analyze how I can improve my customers’ buying experience?
- Do I facilitate the customer’s easy engagement with my company?
- Do I look for new ways to provide the products and services that will benefit the customer?

Building customer lifetime value isn’t just for big corporations. It’s about knowing your customers and how you can improve their buying experience, whether you are a one-man business or have a small staff.



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What's Happening with Trump's Tariffs



Since taking office in January of 2025, President Trump has implemented a sweeping and evolving tariff regime. His “Liberation Day” addresses in early April kicked off a wave of “reciprocal tariffs”—a baseline 10% applied broadly, with bespoke rates ranging from 11% to 50% on countries with significant trade deficits with the U.S.

As of early September, the average effective tariff rate stood at 17.4%, the highest since 1935; after adjusting for consumption shifts, that figure settles at 16.4%, the highest level since 1936. Tariffs have affected a wide array of sectors—from automobiles and metals to pharmaceuticals, semiconductors, and beyond.

On September 4, Trump signed an executive order reducing tariffs on Japanese auto imports from 27.5% to 15%, making the change retroactive to August 7. The agreement also includes a \$550 billion Japanese investment in U.S. projects, agricultural purchases, and defense spending.

On September 6, Trump further loosened tariffs by granting zero duties on key materials—like

nickel, gold, pharmaceutical compounds, and chemicals—for trading partners who finalize industrial export agreements.

An executive order on September 5 removed tariffs on gold bars from “aligned partner” countries, effective September 8. The London Bullion Market Association welcomed the move, which clarified prior confusion and uncertainty in the precious metals market.

Also on September 10, Trump urged the European Union to impose tariffs of up to 100% on imports from China and India as a form of pressure related to their continued Russian oil purchases amid the Ukraine conflict.

Two lower courts have ruled Trump's tariffs beyond presidential authority. The case now sits before the Supreme Court, raising the prospect of massive refunds—between \$750 billion and \$1 trillion—to importers if the tariffs are struck down. The Treasury Department is pushing for expedited adjudication to avoid the economic fallout.



A survey by the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai found that nearly two-thirds of U.S. firms in China expect revenue drops due to Trump's tariffs and retaliatory Chinese measures. Almost 75% of manufacturers foresee lower revenue, in part due to uncertainty hindering strategic planning.

Global and Regional Reactions

- Mexico followed U.S. pressure by proposing a 50% tariff on Chinese-made cars and a broader set of tariffs up to 35% on steel and textiles. The aim is to protect domestic jobs and align with U.S. trade policy.
- In Canada, Prime Minister Mark Carney announced a delay in the EV mandate due to strains from U.S. tariffs—steel (50%) and auto parts (25%)—and introduced support measures for affected sectors.
- Interestingly, U.S. producer prices fell 0.1% in August, despite the tariff pressure—likely due to weakened demand, vendor discounts, or delayed price pass-through—offering some breathing room for policymakers.

Looking Ahead

- **Supreme Court Ruling:** Could determine whether tariffs remain enforceable—or if sweeping refunds must be issued.
- **EU's Response:** Will the EU align with Trump's call for punitive tariffs on China and India?
- **Further Negotiations:** Expect more country-specific deals or relief as administrations balance economic strategy with political objectives.
- **Policy Stability:** Businesses will continue to watch for legal clarity, as volatility undermines long-term investment decisions.

As of September 10, 2025, the U.S. tariff landscape under President Trump remains volatile and strategically recalibrated—simultaneously expansionary and selective. Key allies are seeing relief, while pressure builds on others, all under the shadow of legal scrutiny. For businesses and global markets, navigating this terrain means preparing for rapidly shifting policy and economic winds.

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