

Are your customers loyal or just following inertia?

■ Many of your customers' loyalty is still up for grabs

Customers who buy over and over are loyal, right?

Not necessarily. Some of them may just be in customer inertia, buying because that's the motion they're used to going through.

Their loyalty is still up for grabs.

Truly loyal customers:

- buy more and are willing to pay more
- refer others to you, and
- are more forgiving when mistakes occur.

Tell them they're important

To boost overall loyalty:

- **Increase employee loyalty.** Study after study shows companies that keep employees also have more loyal customers than companies with turnover issues. People work where their efforts are recognized and they feel part of the big picture – not just where they can make more money. Get reps' thoughts on

higher-level ideas. And schedule time each week to recognize their efforts and how they contribute to the whole company.

- **Ask for customers' opinions.** Nothing is more flattering than knowing your opinion is wanted and needed. Tell customers, "You're one of our most important customers, so your opinion on this would be valuable." Then let customers know what you do with their insight.
- **Be the first.** When your company rolls out something new, let customers get a "sneak peek." Tell them because they're special, you wanted them to see or try it first. Or, before you roll it out, ask them to check it out and let you know if it would be valuable. When you keep things fresh, customers will want to stick around to see what's next.

Source: "Make This 'The Year of the Customer:' 8 Ways Customer Loyalty Pays," JoAnna Brandi, www.customercarecoach.com

