

# Create happy and loyal customers



People who visit your store have the potential to become loyal customers, representing not just one sale but multiple sales.

JoAnna Brandi, Publisher

of the **Customer Care Coach**, a retail-training program, provides the following ways you can create happy customers who will develop a loyalty to your store based on the service you give them.

## Greeting Regular Shoppers

Acknowledge people who shop at your store on a regular basis. *“It’s nice to see you again”* is a friendly way to greet a regular. *“People like to have a sense of belonging,”* says Brandi.

Try to remember something memorable about regular shoppers that will help you identify, acknowledge and assist them on repeat visits. For example, jot down styles, designers and colors they like. Call or send them a note to let them know when something you think they will like will be coming in or will be going on sale. This makes them feel special.

## Welcoming New Customers

If you’re not sure if a shopper is new to your store, study the person’s body lan-

guage and behavior. For example, does the shopper look confused about where to go? Don’t be a store where *“nobody comes to greet a new customer,”* says Brandi.

Instead, greet them by saying, *“Welcome, it’s so nice to see you today.”* Other suggestions on approaching new customers:

- **Ask customers:** *“Have you been here before?”* or *“Can I help you find anything?”*
- **Offer to show new shoppers around** to familiarize them with the layout of the store. Example: *“I just want you to know that we keep the jewelry in the back of the store.”*

## Satisfying Shoppers

Identify situations that are often problematic in retail and convert them into satisfying experiences. One potential problem area is trying on merchandise. Many times people try on an inappropriate outfit—one that is the wrong size or color, for example—and will leave the store because they don’t want to take the time and effort to get redressed to visit the selling floor and make another selection. Don’t lose these sales. Suggestions on making trying on clothes a more pleasant experience:

- If you see a shopper lugging around merchandise, **ask if you can hang the merchandise on the fitting room door** so

the shopper doesn’t have to be burdened with carrying it around while making other selections.

- **Check in regularly** with customers to see if they need another size or color. Inquire, *“Can I get you something else?”*
- **Do something extra** to make trying on clothes a pleasant experience. One bathing suit store makes robes available to customers so they feel more comfortable if they want to personally revisit the sales floor to check out more suits or stand in front of the larger mirror that’s outside of their individual dressing room.

Proper treatment of members of your frequent-shopper club should be a priority. Make it easy for those in frequent-shopper programs to benefit from their memberships. If a customer forgets his or her card,



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*Creating happy and loyal customers is about “wanting to make shopping a pleasant experience.”*

offer to call up the information on the computer so the customer can get their points or discounts. One customer who visited a store with her preferred-customer discount coupon forgot to bring her card with her and was told that she would need to go home and get the card in order to get the discount. This turned a positive offer into a negative experience for the customer. Think about what you can do to please customers instead of turning them away.

## “No Problem”

Brandi thinks that the often-used phrase “no problem”—meant to convey a sales associate’s willingness to satisfy the customer—is a problem. Says Brandi: *“Two words that a customer does not want to hear are “no” and “problem.”* Instead, state something positive, such as: *“It’s my pleasure”, “Absolutely”, “Of course I would...”;* or *“I’d be happy to!”*

## “I Love the Word ‘Welcome’”

Creating happy and loyal customers is “all about hospitality and customer care,” says Brandi. Make your customers feel that they are welcome in your store—and that they are special. Says Brandi, “I love the

word *welcome*. Said with sincerity and a smile, it sets the stage for a pleasant experience.” Shopping is as much about hospitality and customer care as it is about price and convenience.

## Creating the Proper Atmosphere

Other tips on hospitality, service and creating special services that will foster a pleasant atmosphere for shoppers:

- **Establish “heads up”** behavior when customers come into the store: Make eye contact and acknowledge their presence instead of diverting your attention to “heads down” paperwork or stock work.
- **“Build rapport with customers,”** says Brandi, and “make it your personal goal to delight the customer.” This will help you navigate any situation. Brandi advises, “Take a deep breath and listen to what the customer is saying.”
- **Give shoppers the space to make a purchase decision.** Successfully serving customers is a delicate balance between attention—asking them if they have any questions about merchandise—and not making them feel that you are breathing down their necks.
- **Know that little things can upset customers,** such as ignoring them or having them wait in a long line. Long lines are frustrating. Keep as many cash registers open as possible. If customers must wait, have a little gift ready for them to say thank-you for their patience. A little chocolate goes a long way to soothe upset feelings.

- **Make the shopper’s family member or friend comfortable.** The longer the companion is comfortable, the more the shopper will buy, is Brandi’s philosophy. Provide companions with a comfortable seating area, reading material, cookies and a beverage. Consider setting up a children’s space, with coloring books and music to keep a child occupied—within sight of the parent—while the parent is shopping.
- **Create special services.** For example, if a shopper orders flowers or purchases a gift item, ask if you can send the customer a notice reminding him or her of another upcoming special occasion. “People like to share information if they

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*“welcome.”*

think it’s for their benefit, not yours,” says Brandi, and it’s easy to strike up a conversation during the gift-wrapping.

Creating happy and loyal customers is about “wanting to make shopping a pleasant experience,” says Brandi.

*Retail Challenge* interviewed JoAnna Brandi, Publisher of the *Customer Care Coach* ([www.customercarecoach.com](http://www.customercarecoach.com)), a weekly e-mail retail-training program, speaker and author on customer retention and loyalty, Boca Raton, FL.