

Customers For Life
By Patti Brotherton

It seemed not too long ago that making a customer for life was not too difficult in the real estate business as long as you stayed in touch with as little as two contacts a year. A small note or card annually and a telephone call once in a while. Those traditional relationships are changing. Why? The Internet, of course.

You can still make customers for life. But, you need to earn it! It is still not difficult, but systematic and certainly service-based. The days of you getting a referral from someone because his or her mother used you several years before are virtually gone. So, how do you make these customers for life?

Knowledge

Learn everything you can about using technology and information gathering methods using the computer. You want to be able to give your customers as much information as you can to help them make a selling or a buying decision.

Send them by email an updated CMA on their home every year at the same time. Send them by email a recap of the current market conditions every 6 months. Keeping them informed without them asking for it.

Have a website that also serves as a community bulletin board. Let your customers access this to post a garage sale, or to sell a personal item, to inquire about a good gardening service, and so on.

Make sure your customers know that your website has valuable information on it about the community and events that are going on during the year. Make sure that your website always has the latest, up-to-date information on services available in the community at reasonable rates or at least where to find these services.

Follow-up

You need to be in touch with your customers current and past all the time. No longer will you be remembered by sending a Christmas card annually. You should be in touch monthly with something of value in the mail.

You need to be in touch monthly or more often by email with something of value. Let them know about a listing of yours before it comes on the market. Let them know about a special promotion your company is having before it hits the papers.

You need to be in touch with a personal note to let them know that they are special to you. It doesn't have to be fancy, just a quick **handwritten** note to let them know that you

are thinking of them. **DON'T FORGET THIS PERSONAL TOUCH!** It's just as important as knowing technology.

Services

Your goal should be to be their source for information on after move-in services. Do you know who is a great painter? Do you know who does a fantastic job in landscaping? Do you know a plumber who is service oriented and reasonable?

If your customer is new to your area, why not take a couple hours and introduce your customer to various service providers that you do business with; e.g., a hairdresser or barber, cleaners, shoe repair, etc. How much more will they think of you when you took the time to personally introduce these people to shops that you also frequent?

Do you have copies of menus from your favorite restaurants for your customers? Do you have the schedule of after school or summer programs for kids in the community? Do you have the schedule of any performing arts in your community for your customers?

Go out of your way to help people feel good about working with you.

Bottom Line

*People are going to the Internet to find out information and possibly select a Realtor for their next transaction. They aren't going to do that if you are already providing it! **Earn their loyalty by being loyal to them!***