

Giving thanks to your customers

IT'S NOVEMBER, which means it's the season for giving thanks for food, friends and family around the Thanksgiving table. But it's also a good time to think about saying thank you to the people who make your business work — your customers!

With the spirit of gratitude in the air, November is a great month for a customer appreciation campaign. “But wait, it's already November!” you proclaim, wishing you had read this article last month. Fear not! Saying thank you to your customers can be as simple or as complex as you want it to be. Here are several ideas for ways to show gratitude, ranging from easy to more difficult:

Just say thanks

At a minimum, you can post your thanks on your company Facebook page or send a quick email to your list. It doesn't have to be long, but it does need to be an authentic message saying thank you to your customers during this season of gratitude. You can even keep it to Twitter's 140 characters, if need be.

Call out specific customers

Do you have customers who are particularly loyal, have a great story, or are your business' best ambassadors? It never hurts to say thank you to those people, either with a specific note to them or by publicly recognizing them. Not only will it strengthen their commitment to you, but it will show others that you really care about your customers — and know them by name!

Give out coupons or special discounts

If you want to put your money where your mouth is, you can both thank customers and provide them with a tangible sign of your thanks. “We're showing our appreciation by giving you 20 percent

off!” This is also a good way to say thank you to a particular segment of your customers. For example, you might give a special discount to people who follow your Facebook page to help them feel they're getting something exclusive for being a loyal fan.

Create a unique print piece

Posting a thank you message online or sending an email is easy and costs nothing but your time, but sometimes creating something people can hold in their hands shows a deeper level of gratitude. Create



a thank you card or another printed piece that can be mailed to the addresses on your list. Go the extra mile by personalizing the piece — signing or even writing a little note of thanks — to show how grateful you really are.

Give customers something

Is there something your customers can really use that you can give them personally or send to them in the mail? Maybe it's a seed packet, information on the most popular plants, or tips on getting a garden started. Maybe it's something your customers would gladly pay for, and



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would be tickled pink to receive in their inbox. This can, of course, quickly get expensive and complicated, but when it comes to showing your gratitude it will speak volumes.

Don't forget your employees

Customers aren't the only people to whom you can show appreciation. Say thank you to your employees, too! Any of the ways listed above will work. Employees also value things like extra time off or a bonus, if that fits your business model. It can be easy to focus on your customers and forget about your employees, but they need and deserve your thanks, too!

One final note: however you say thanks, authenticity is king and being “salesy” is a no-no. If your thank you is genuine, your customers and employees will be able to tell, and they will appreciate your gratitude.

By contrast, if your words say “Thank you!” but your tone and your intention says “Buy more, we want your money!” you will turn customers off. Be honest and authentic, and your message will be well received.

Saying thank you is a simple and vital way of fostering and maintaining relationships with the people who make your business tick. During this month of giving thanks, let's all do what our mothers told us to do: say thank you! ☺