

Surviving the Hard Times with Your Customers

By Judith Filek—President
Impact Communications, Inc.

Many of our existing customers are no longer able to make their usual purchases or upgrades. They can no longer provide training for their employees. The temptation is, of course, to move on to those who are able. However, ignoring our existing customers in difficult times insures that they won't stay loyal when conditions improve. Just because you have a great product, it doesn't mean a customer will continue to buy from you in the future. Now is the time to solidify those relationships by being attentive, really attentive.

Relationships with customers take work. To have a lasting relationship, you must continue to call customers on a regular basis. The purpose of your call may only be to empathize with them and state that you care or to share that your company is also experiencing a downturn. While it won't bring immediate revenue, customers will remember.

Now is also the time to show your customer that you pay attention to their business by providing white papers, industry trends or other relevant information that can help them survive and better manage their business. Companies are always interested in learning more about growth markets or opportunities for their industry. If I manage an IT department, for example, I would love to know how the technology will change in the next five years so that I can start to prepare. The internet is rich with pertinent data. The net gain for you is that customers will start to see you as a trusted advisor instead of a sales person.

Another suggestion is to provide low cost or no cost demonstrations or promotions. Our organization is providing one hour presentations or "lunch and learns" to our phone skills customers. A software client is allowing customers to test their new product for a ninety day trial period free of cost. Car dealerships are not only providing special pricing but the opportunity to return the car if one loses their job. Some are even will-

ing to make payments for up to six months if the purchaser can't.

Finally, if your organization has not yet gotten into them, Webinars are a great way of connecting with a wider audience base, while at the same time enticing new customers. On your company's part, there is minimal effort and little cost. Additionally, web based learning can provide your company with pertinent feedback on products, features or processes that customers would like implemented. Customers, whether new or old, love web based training because typically they are learning something new and because they are typically only sixty minutes in length.

In troubling times, people need high touch. We encourage all of you who primarily do business by phone to remember the importance of connecting with your customers. We challenge you to continue to look for ways to keep your name in front of your customers.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.

