

There's Five Points to A Star!

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The star; a symbol of ultimate success, what everyone wants to attain. Remember when you were in grade school and you completed your task successfully? With what did your teacher reward you? A star. In the business of e-commerce stardom isn't as easy to achieve as it was back then.

It's a faceless, un-personal web we've woven. How do we overcome this obstacle as a service or product retailer? We follow the five points to stardom! There is a way to successfully build a relationship and break through the un-personal nature of our business.

Point 1: Sympathy

The most important part of your business endeavor. I'm talking about being sympathetic to your customer. Listen to the needs of your customer. Understand the needs of your customer. Know what the need is of the customer related to your product or service, and create a product or service sympathetic to that need.

Example: You determine a need has arisen for affordable banner design for small internet businesses. Small business owners don't usually have the amount of money that large corporations have to advertise their business. Developing an affordable alternative will not only be lucrative for your business but also for the small business owner. It's a WIN-WIN!

Point 2: Sense of Urgency

Providing your product or service with a sense of urgency is of utmost importance. If a customer has to continue to wait for a response from your company on an order, an email, or even a quote it could mean a loss of business for you.

Advice: Respond to your customers within 24 hours at the least. If you can respond within 6-12 you are more likely to gain a business relationship. Waiting 2-3 days to return an email is unacceptable. Unless your site policies state otherwise (and in advance to the customer) more than 14 business days is too long to wait for a product or service. Return any quotes for pricing or service requests as soon as possible. Most likely the person that requested the information is in search of someone or something, "right now".

Point 3: Smile

This is an important point. Presenting yourself positively in any of your communication is extremely important for your business. Have you ever heard the saying "Believe in yourself, and others will believe in you?" Apply this to your business. Believe in what you have to offer and "smile" in every communication with your customer. You're asking yourself "how the heck do we "smile" over the internet?"

Advice: Smiling goes beyond you sitting behind your computer in a good mood. We all know your customer can't see your smile, but they can read it, feel it, and hear it! When responding to an email, add that extra touch. Make your communication through your writing and your images on your site "positive". Remember that your website is your "face" to the world. Be sure to put your make-up on and comb your hair!

Example: Here's an email response from a happy person and a not so happy person. You be the judge. Which email would you rather receive?

Customer: I'm looking for someone to design my website. Can you quote me on a price for an entire package? How long do you think it will take to complete the project? Tammy

Response from Jeanne: Tammy, I'd LOVE to help you! What is the name of your website and do you have any ideas for what you'd like it to look like? The pricing on an average package including your banner, button, logo, slogan, and backgrounds is \$100.00. Depending on how long it takes us to decide on colors etc. I usually complete work within one week. I really appreciate your request and look forward to working with you soon! Thanks! Jeanne

Response from Jenny: I do graphic design work. My prices can be found on www.mygraphicsite.com. You can see the pricing under "prices". How long it takes depends on you and how fast you get me the information.

Did you feel the "smile" in Jeanne's response? Did you feel the "smile" in Jenny's response?

Jeanne did this perfectly! We'll give her a star! What did Jeanne do right?

1. Responded to her customer using the customer's name.
2. Gave that extra touch with the "I'd LOVE to help you".
3. Immediately asked for the customer's feedback.
4. Quoting her a price even though she knows that the prices were clearly on her site. (We've all been there right?)
5. Closing with another positive remark about working with the client really soon.

Great job Jeanne!

Point 4: Surprise

Surprise your customer with something extra! In this world of e-commerce the likeliness that your site is the only one of its kind is probably next to nothing. You have to make yourself stand out. Adding that extra touch or going that extra mile for each of your customers makes them feel special. In return they'll come back to you when they need something else or they'll refer their friends. Never underestimate the power of "word of mouth". We'll cover that in another article!

Example: Adding something special or surprising a customer with something extra doesn't have to cost a thing! Of course you can add an extra product to their order, but sometimes the extras are simpler than that. Providing something for FREE on your site such as content, a newsletter, or even a free graphic is something that will make your customer feel special. Not to mention it's a great way to drive in some traffic to your site!

Real life application: I had the pleasure of working with Shea Cooper owner of www.CountryDoodleDoo.com recently. She redid some graphics for my site www.TheCandleCoop.com. Upon completion of my order she sent me an "extra" email. Upon opening the email I saw her note that thanked me for being a customer and said she always provided her customers with free wallpaper for their desktops to match their site. I was thrilled. I was impressed with how quickly Shea responded, how she took on the project with a sense of

urgency, and the way she made me feel special by sending something extra. So impressed, I brought her on board at www.AdvertisingMoms.com as our exclusive country graphic designer! See relationships do pay off!

Point 5: Suggestions

Remember back on point 3 when we talked about listening? Practice that skill again. Only this time not only listen, but ask too! Ask your customers what they would like to see on your site. Ask them about any new colors or products they'd be interested in. A great way to do this is offer a feedback or suggestions form. You can even go the extra mile to email them personally! Whatever you do, ask, ask, ask!

Ask for feedback from customers. Ask for suggestions from other web owners. One thing is for sure, you won't find out if you don't ask! Prepare yourself for the answers you'll receive when you do ask. This could possibly be the hardest thing to do, because they might not always be the answers you want to hear. Nevertheless, take the suggestions into consideration, decide what is best for you and take action!

In review we've covered five points to stardom; sympathy, sense of urgency, smile, surprise, and suggestions. Following these five points is no guarantee to a successful venture. However, I can guarantee you'll feel like a star!

Tara Crooks, or "Household 6" in the Crooks' family, is best known for her ability to motivate and empower others. Tara's journey with the military began in 1998 when she and her husband PCS'd to their first duty station, Ft Hood. She and her husband, Kevin (US ARMY), have two beautiful little girls, Wrena and Chloe. Their family, including two dogs and a cat, is all snuggled in their cozy home in Fort Sill, Okla. Tara is the host of Army Wife Talk Radio and cofounder of the popular website www.ArmyWifeNetwork.com.

Army Wife Network is interactive empowerment for Army wives. Featuring Army Wife Talk Radio the original internet talk radio program for military wives, "Field Problems" a self-syndicated question and answer column for military families, "Field Exercises" live interactive events for military spouses, message boards, Loving