

## **Connecting To Customers (Instead Of Trying To Sell Them)**

by Mike Smiley

(from October 2017 Decision Point Newsletter)

In the past 18 months, several clients have asked for help with a very similar challenge. Regardless of industry, the companies are seeking solutions to better engage their customers.

As most sales and marketing professionals know, retaining a customer can be anywhere from five to 20 times less expensive than acquiring a new one. What's more, the challenge of engagement – and customer loyalty – has become more pronounced as B2B buyers have taken control of the sales cycle.

As a result, connecting to customers – versus always trying to sell (or upsell) them – is an affordable, sustainable strategy for business growth. Instead of point-in-time marketing and sales efforts, companies are investing in initiatives that engage customers over a long period of time so that the company can capture the customer (and sale) at the right moment.

In our experience, companies that enjoy highly engaged customers understand that the motivators for B2B buyers include the fear of making the wrong product decision, confidence in projected ROI and trust in a company's brand and their sales team. A proven solution is to use emails, videos, website and other content assets to:

- 1. Talk to your customer as a person, not a company**

Business communication does not have to have a formal tone. To connect with your customer, use friendly, jargon-free language – be real, not mechanical.

- 2. Share your stories with your customers.**

Your examples of success and anecdotes of how your products came to be reveal the thinking and people behind what your customers value...and buying.

- 3. Help your customers solve their problems.**

Develop a process that identifies the problems your buyers (and their industry) face and use that information to demonstrate you are thinking about their business. When your customers are ready for answers, they will come to you for them.

- 4. Make your customers smarter.**

Most business people are open to learning anything that enables them to produce and deliver their goods or services more efficiently or less expensively. Webinars, white papers, video demonstrations and similar content can demonstrate your company's products, capabilities and experience. Show the value and the selling will occur through your connection with your customer.

While high level customer connectivity might appear time-consuming, much of it can be automated with marketing technology that allows companies to streamline and measure the tasks and content. In the end, your objective is to cultivate relationships with customers who consume the information you share and, in turn, value what it brings to their business.