3 Effective Engagement Tactics to Help Small Businesses Create Authentic Connections With Customers



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Over the past few years, small business owners have been resilient in the face of change, overcoming a variety of obstacles in the business environment. Despite the challenges of today's economic landscape, it remains clear the reason *why* small business owners continue to be confident in their revenue and business outlook.

Small businesses have the unique ability to create personalized experiences for their customers by getting creative with their outreach and customer engagement techniques, setting them apart from big-box retailers and larger competitors. Small business owners across the country are actively engaging with their customers to ensure they can meet them where they are, by prioritizing their needs, creating new and more regular touchpoints and building strong brand awareness in their communities.

Through this, we're seeing that putting customers first helps improve sales and grow profits, leading to more sustainable business growth in the long term and highlighting the role that connection plays in turning a one-time transaction into a meaningful relationship.

As you look to drive customer interaction in the second half of 2024, here are a few ideas you can consider implementing to improve your customer experience.

Related: **8 Effective Ways to Connect With Your Customer**

1. Personalize your customer experience

Personalization is all about understanding your customers' individual needs. Anticipating them and understanding their preferences shows your customers that you're paying attention to them.

For businesses with a physical footprint, personalization goes beyond just remembering what they always buy. It includes tailoring your recommendations thoughtfully based on what you already know about them and even creating loyalty programs that incentivize them to come back and shop in-store. For example, if you owned a coffee shop, you could offer a customer a pastry on the house that you know would pair really well with the coffee they always order.

If your business operates virtually, consider sending personalized thank-you notes to repeat customers to learn more about them and what they like about your business. Also, consider sending them personalized recommendations based on their past purchases to keep them informed and apprised of your most recent offerings and announcements.

Regardless of your business model, refining and adjusting your engagement tactics to better suit and enhance your customers' experiences will help make them feel more connected to you and your business – effectively building brand loyalty and increasing your business' value to your customers.

2. Listen to your customers' feedback

Small business owners should strive to create an open dialogue

with their customers. Two-way communication helps establish a deeper level of trust and transparency, making customers feel seen, heard and valued.

For example, our 2024 Bank of America Business Owner Report found that over the past year, 79% of small business owners said they proactively gathered customer feedback. These business owners are using various methods to help analyze their customers' sentiment, including monitoring online review platforms and sending out post-purchase customer service surveys.

Implementing a customer feedback loop also helps businesses assess whether and when business owners should act on feedback they've received. Consider creating a framework with questions to guide you. Questions could include:

- Is this a recurring complaint or suggestion?
- Could this hurt my sales in the long run?
- What are the pros and cons of implementing this feedback?

Being a business owner comes with certain complexities that your customers may not understand, so it's important to be able to identify trends in their feedback and differentiate which are worth acting on. When you act on customer feedback properly, it leads to improved products and services and, in turn, happier customers.

Related: **How to Really Hear and Use Customer Feedback**

3. Leverage social media for connection

Social media continues to be a powerful tool that allows small business owners to connect with, grow and sustain their

customer base. Our Business Owner Report also found that most small business owners think brand building is important to the success of their business. Nearly half of the owners we surveyed actively work to create a consistent external brand for their business. The wider reach through social media allows business owners to connect with new customers, promote their products and services, and outline their brand's values, reinforcing their company's unique perspective and business advantage.

Social media has also brought new ways of connecting with customers online – allowing business owners to keep an active pulse on how their customers are engaging with their brand, all while fostering deeper relationships with customers. Social media can also help you humanize your business. Consider posting about yourself and your employees or even hosting "About Me" or Q&A sessions where customers can get to know you on a deeper level.

Related: How Social Media Can Build Trust and Engagement Within Your Community

Throughout the ever-changing terrain of the business landscape, small business owners should continue to prioritize what matters most – their customers – keeping them at the forefront of business plans and decisions. That's why small business owners aren't just sellers; they are trusted advisors, friends and an active part of their communities. From harnessing the power of creating a personalized experience to employing customer feedback and utilizing social media to build community, small business owners will be better equipped for a fruitful finish to the year.

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