



**RELATIONSHIP  
MARKETING**

Establishing an Ongoing  
Relationship Between  
**Brand & Consumer**

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## Introduction

Relationship marketing might at a first glance seem like yet another buzz word with little practical use in real life, but the fact is that it's the complete opposite of a buzz word.

In many ways, it's a return to how business was done a long time ago. It's a marketing strategy that focuses on the human element in business, instead of just money exchanged between faceless entities.

In this guide you'll learn:

- Exactly what relationship marketing is
- Why it has become so popular in recent years
- How to use it to reach new customers
- How to increase customer retention and loyalty
- How it ties into customer service, and how to best deal with dissatisfied customers from a relationship marketing perspective

Let's get started, shall we?

## Section 1: Relationship Marketing - What & Why?

Relationship marketing is a term that is often thrown around these days, and indeed it is a strategy that seems to become more popular with every passing year.

In many ways it is the opposite of the transactional marketing strategies that dominated most of the 20th century. Where transactional (or traditional) marketing is all about a series of single sales events, with no regard of who the consumer is, relationship marketing is about establishing an on-going relationship between brand and consumer.

Thanks to the Internet, this approach is gaining in popularity, as it has become easier than ever to stay in touch with customers and *build a relationship* with them over the long term.

Many companies these days incorporate at least some elements of relationship marketing in their overall strategy.

Let's take a look at two examples to better illustrate the difference between transactional and relationship marketing:

### **Example 1: Transactional marketing**

MegaDrinks International learns that energy drinks are becoming more and more popular, so they decide to enter this market with a product of their own. Through research they learn that students are the number one consumers of energy drinks, so they decide to target that market with their new product.

While their new drink is a lot like other energy drinks out there, even sharing the same basic formula, it has a catchy name related to studying/learning (let's call it Learning Lava!) and a cool design.

They conduct extensive market research to find the optimal price point for their new drink. Deals are made with supermarkets all over the country, who will sell it to thirsty, tired students. Finally, they launch a big advertising campaign in all mediums to promote it.

After a few months, the results are in: their new energy drink is a success! Thanks to the eye-catching name and design, a sizable portion of customers choose their product among the 10-15 similar drinks on the shelf.

It continues to sell well enough, but after some years a couple of problems appear...

Due to a malfunctioning machine used to mix the formula, a whole batch has gone out with a less-than-pleasant smell emitting from the cans when opened.

A PR specialist is recruited, and a statement goes out from the CEO that the problem has been taken care of, and it will not happen again. They even pay off a few investigative reporters who threatened to write unflattering articles about the company. Still, many former customers are now hesitant to buy the Learning Lava brand again.

Also, the stock holders aren't too happy with the energy drink venture, as profits from it stay about the same every year. It seems that once students finish their education, they also stop buying the Learning Lava energy drink. Meaning the market for their product isn't growing.

Finally, a foreign competitor has just launched a competing product called Education Energy, at a much lower price point.

This situation isn't easy to recover from. Sure, they could try to lower their prices even further, or make a new design - maybe even rename it to wash away some of the bad publicity from the odor incident.

After debating it back and forth, they decide to just let it go. They had a good run, but it looks like it's over for this venture. Not to worry though - since they're used to the transactional marketing strategy, this is something they had counted on happening since the beginning. So, time to come up with a new product and start over!

## **Example 2: Relationship marketing**

Just as in example 1, MegaDrinks International decides they want to start selling energy drinks. However, this time they go about it differently.

Instead of treating this like a standalone venture, they decide they're in the energy drink business for the long haul. They're not going to get pushed out in 2 years by new, competing products.

So, this time they invent an umbrella brand, for their energy drink products, SuperEnergy(tm). While their first energy drink product will still be marketed to students, the long term strategy is gaining customers that are loyal to the SuperEnergy brand for the rest of their lives. Students who finish their education will start buying SuperEnergy(tm) Job Jolt instead of Learning Lava. When they retire, they'll move on to the Senior Speed product.

These products will be priced slightly higher than their competitors. MegaDrinks have decided they're not going to compete on price, as they'd just get undercut eventually by a competitor with access to cheaper labor and less regulation.

On to marketing. Instead of a traditional ad campaign, they rely the viral power of the web and word-of-mouth for most of their marketing. They introduce loyalty programs to encourage repeat buying, and regularly hold contests with generous prizes. They make heavy use of Twitter, and respond quickly, seriously and sometimes funny/witty to customer complaints and questions.

They even put together a couple of free, helpful how-to guides: one that teaches the best study techniques, and one that serves as a companion guide for young people entering the workforce. There is no branding or advertising at all in these guides, just excellent information. To get a copy, however, you have to enter your e-mail address on the SuperEnergy website. Once in a while, they'll send out e-mails to these subscribers with a mix of light, fun entertainment and discount deals/coupons. Open rates are high because they're quick to read and often very useful.

Then, just as with the parallel universe, transactional marketing version of MegaDrinks, there is an incident at the manufacturing plant. A huge batch goes out with that foul smell, threatening to put an end to the entire venture.

This time, however, they handle it differently. They use all their communication channels to broadcast a message: anyone who's bought one of these nasty-smelling drinks can send it in, and will in return receive a free 12-pack as a

replacement. They'll also get two free t-shirts with a humorous pun referring to the incident, one for themselves and one for a friend.

Instead of trying to cover it up, they let everyone know that they made a mistake. The CEO even records a heartfelt apology on his cell phone, which is proudly shown on the homepage of their website for a whole month.

When the results are in after the first year, MegaDrinks International finds that their SuperEnergy brand is growing nicely, despite that nasty odor incident. Customer confidence is completely restored.

They're not making as much profit up-front as they would have using pure transactional marketing, but analysts are certain they are going to keep growing year and year as more people are introduced to the brand (and then introduce their friends to it).

New, competing products come and go but the SuperEnergy sales remain steady. Even with a slightly higher price, many people simply prefer their brand over the others. They aren't entirely sure why, but for some reason the SuperEnergy brand just resonates with them more than other brands.

## **The advantages of relationship marketing**

As you've seen from these examples, the advantages of relationship marketing are many:

- You gain a loyal following who would never use another brand
- Consumers recommend your products to their friends
- You can often charge a higher price, since pricing becomes less important as brand loyalty increases
- If you want to expand into a new market with a similar demographic, many customers would follow you there
- Less money spent on big advertising campaigns and customer acquisition
- Ability to turn unhappy customers into lifelong proponents through good customer service

## **Any disadvantages?**

There are a few disadvantages to consider before opting for a full-on relationship marketing approach.

First of all, it's very difficult to measure the effect on sales by individual marketing/customer service initiatives. It's a holistic approach where there is often no obvious connection between cause and effect, unlike traditional marketing where you can often just look at your numbers and see you're spending \$x on advertising and making \$y in sales.

It's also notoriously difficult to implement well for some companies. Consider a company that manufactures toothpaste, who decide they want to take advantage of relationship marketing. They hold contests and tweet like madmen, but still have a hard time gaining a loyal following. Why?

Because, to most people, their product is a commodity, not a lifestyle choice. People might care about the general features, such as the flavor, strength, etc, and the company might gain some brand loyalty just from that, but few will be rushing to add them on Twitter.

Another disadvantage, mainly for small companies, is the time, money and expertise required to properly set up all the communication channels and marketing efforts. Hiring dedicated staff just to sit on Twitter the whole day may simply be too expensive. Too often this results in one or more channels being neglected, and the overall effectiveness suffers as a result. In this case it's important to know your limits and don't try to take on more than you can handle.

Note that even if you aren't the perfect candidate for pure relationship marketing, you may still want to incorporate some of the elements in your overall strategy. Oftentimes, a mix of both strategies can be the best solution.

## **Top candidates for relationship marketing**

Some types of businesses work especially well with relationship marketing. Here are a few examples:

- An author who chooses to publish and sell her books on her own, staying in close contact with her readers using social media and live appearances
- A computer manufacturer who builds computers for avid gamers, holding contests, sharing gaming tips and tweeting gaming news
- A producer of baby food who launches a well researched blog, educating parents and answering questions about nutrition for children
- A web hosting company that publishes high quality tutorials, and sends their customers a free gift after experiencing downtime
- ...and many more!

## **Section 1 Takeaways**

- Relationship marketing can be a great alternative to transactional marketing, but it's not for everyone
- While transactional marketing is straight forward and easy to grasp, relationship marketing can be trickier to get right
- Relationship marketing can take longer to deliver results, but can lead to much better results in the long run
- In many cases, incorporating a mix of the both strategies is the best solution
- It's OK to "pick and choose" the relationship marketing strategies you're the most comfortable with and focus on those
- Commodity products have the least to gain from relationship marketing

## **Section 2: Building Customer Relationships**

Now that you've seen how powerful relationship marketing can be, it's time to take a look at the actual techniques and strategies you can use. You have to decide for yourself which ones that suit you and the style of your company, but the more of these you can put into use, the higher your chances are of becoming successful with relationship marketing.

### **Fundamentals**

There are a few basic ideas that need to be integrated into the core of your business in order to successfully build relationships with customers:

#### **Make sure your customers can relate to you**

The larger the company, the harder this seems to be to get right. The truth is no one wants a "relationship" with a faceless corporation. There needs to be a human element, and a sense of personality. A great example is Apple, especially while Steve Jobs was still running the show. Now there's a company with personality!

If you can put yourself in a highly visible position it will be much easier for people to relate to your company, because they'll see that there is a real human being behind it. Many small businesses make the mistake of trying to act like a big company, instead of using their small size to their advantage by emphasizing the individuals who work there.

On the other end of the spectrum would be companies like the telecom giants - they often have no personality at all, and are very hard to relate to for an average consumer.

Being relatable is especially important when things go wrong. If people can't relate to you or your company, forgiveness will be hard. Forgiving a person, with flaws all humans can relate to, is much easier.

#### **Realize that you aren't that important to most of your customers (yet)**

A very common mistake made by small and large businesses alike is that they overestimate how important they are to their customers. Think about how many companies you buy something from every year. They all compete for your attention in one way or another, but it's only a few of them that you really *care about*.

Companies that overestimate how important they are to their customers are often easy to spot. A great example is when a company decides they need to be on social media. Proudly announcing that they're now on Facebook, they expect their customers to flock to their page and start participating, sharing stories and liking posts. They are, of course, fooling themselves. What's in it for the customer?

Unless there's already a solid relationship in place, or incentives are given, no one is going to care enough to follow them on Facebook.

Realizing this is an important first step, as they can then start focusing on ways to *make* themselves more important and relevant to their customers. By staying humble, the chance of being successful with relationship marketing is much improved.

### **Be open and transparent**

Many large corporations are still severely lacking in this department. How many times in your life have heard a company say they do X and then actually do Y? Sometimes it seems that the larger the company, the less they care about telling the truth.

It may have been a viable strategy in the past, before the Internet came along and made it so that anyone who knew the truth could broadcast it to the whole world in seconds. Still, some companies never learn it seems. You can use this to your advantage, separate yourself from your competitors who haven't realized this, and win over their customers.

Transparency is so important because it builds trust. Admitting when you've made a mistake makes you and your company more *relatable*, and in the long term it will serve to increase their confidence in you.

## **Improve customer service**

Building mutually beneficial relationships with your customers starts with a long, hard look at your customer service. This is the one part of your company that has the ability to turn dissatisfied customers into loyal proponents.

It's also one area where many go wrong. When profits are down, cutting costs in customer service is often one of the first actions taken. Sometimes by trying to make the processes more streamlined and effective (while sacrificing user friendliness), sometimes by outsourcing it to cheaper countries.

Think about the times you've had to contact customer service at a large corporation. Chances are you had to navigate through a maze of cryptic directions, only to be put on hold for hours (or, in the case of email/chat, never even get a response). That is, of course, the opposite of what you should do if you're taking a relationship marketing approach.

These systems might save a few bucks in the short run, but they will do nothing to improve the reputation of a brand, or build relationships with customers.

Consider doing the complete opposite: put real people in the front line. Don't outsource customer service - hire local people with real training. Educate them in customer relationship building, and make sure they know the fundamentals talked about earlier.

Give the customer service employees more power and responsibility. Tell them to act like themselves, instead of just reading from a script or following instructions blindly. If they act like a human being, customers will (most of the time) treat them like one. They'll be able to *relate* to them, and by extension, to your company.

## **The right way to use social media**

Social media continues to be popular as a way for companies to reach out and talk to their customers, yet very few get it exactly right.

One of the most common mistakes on sites like Facebook and Twitter is treating it like a one-way conversation. It's very easy to spot - a company will push out

content and updates at regular intervals, yet rarely respond to comments or discussion.

Encouraging discussion, and taking part in it, is extremely important in order to be successful with social media. Especially when a customer has something negative to say about the company, in which case many just choose to ignore (or even worse, delete) the complaint and hope that nobody sees it. That's the worst possible thing to do, as it may very well blow up into a huge deal if left unattended to. It's the Internet after all - always assume that nothing can *really* be deleted.

Not every update/post needs to be a discussion piece of course, but the general environment must be one that encourages feedback and lets people know that the company is listening. Treat social media like a dialogue, not like a blog. Don't be afraid to use a bit of humor either!

### **Be authentic**

Another important piece of the social media puzzle is being authentic. There are countless examples of typically "boring" companies that all of a sudden start posting funny/cute videos on social media in an attempt to gain favor and cause a buzz among followers. Usually, people will see right through this as it has a distinctly false ring to it.

Just because it's social media doesn't mean it has to appeal to a mass crowd. It doesn't always have to be entertaining, or "share-worthy". It does, however, need to resonate with your customers, and serve to increase the strength of your relationship with them.

To come up with a strategy for social media content, start by thinking about how you can make deliver as much *value* as possible to your followers.

Here are a few good examples:

- A law firm could offer a weekly "ask the lawyer" service, with free, basic legal advice
- An author could share glimpses of their daily life and writing process, and post samples of upcoming books

- A plumber could mix up funny real-life stories with useful advice, drawing from his own experiences
- A supermarket could post recipes, with beautiful pictures and discounts on the ingredients needed to make them

All of these businesses could (and should) encourage their followers to participate and discuss.

To encourage discussion even more, there could be small incentives. For example, the author could ask for critique on an up-coming book, and reward the most constructive comment with their own character in the book. The supermarket could offer free groceries to the person who puts the best spin on their recipe and submits it to their Facebook page.

No doubt this is an area that requires dedication, and a lot of experimenting, to get just right. It's important to realize that it's OK to make mistakes. Remember that people prefer a *relatable* business, and what's more human and relatable than making mistakes and owning up to them?

## **The power of free resources and information**

While information in general is available in overwhelming abundance these days, finding solid, trustworthy information written by knowledgeable people is not that easy.

Well-written, useful resources written by experts will always be highly sought after. This is something a savvy business devoted to relationship marketing can utilize.

Let's take a look at an example:

Web hosting is one of the most competitive, cut-throat industries in the world. Most companies are prepared to take losses for years on a new customer, hoping that they'll stick around long enough to eventually generate a profit of a few bucks per year. There are literally thousands of web hosts, most competing against each other with similar offerings, on the same global market.

How could a new web hosting business differentiate themselves and get attention from potential customers?

One way would be creating a huge, free repository of tutorials and how-to guides. Some savvy hosts have already caught on to this, and crank out high quality guides in a steady stream. They wouldn't be doing that if it wasn't profitable in the long term - producing such guides can be quite costly.

For this strategy to work well, branding and in-content advertising needs to be kept to a minimum. The feeling must not be that you're doing this simply as a way of advertising your business. Go into it with the goal of educating and providing value, and you can do very well with it.

This strategy can work for almost any type of business.

- The plumber could put together a comprehensive guide on how to do routine maintenance yourself
- The author could write a guide that teaches people the basics of writing books
- The supermarket could assemble a collection of the best tips for finding coupons
- The law firm could make a handy little book with useful legal advice for everyday situations

## **E-mail**

While being one of the oldest technologies of the Internet, e-mail is as powerful today as it ever was. Practically everyone has an e-mail address, and so far it remains the number one way to stay in touch with customers. There are two main ways to use email for relationship marketing:

### **Newsletters**

Most businesses today know the value of sending out a regular newsletter. However, just as with social media, this easily turns into the "Hey, remember us? Come buy something!" kind of messages - not good.

The best newsletters are those that customers look forward to, and open every time they show up in the inbox. Just as with social media, the focus should be on providing *value* to your customers, whether that comes in the form of discount coupon or an informative article.

Sending frequency can be (and is) debated back and forth for ages with no clear conclusion, but most experts agree that it's best to pick a frequency and stick to it. Think you can send out a valuable e-mail every week? Go for it! But don't just do this for 3 weeks and then give up - you have to be consistent. If every week seems too much, perhaps a bi-weekly or monthly newsletter would work better for you? Don't forget that you could always ask your customers what they prefer!

Finally, one of the most powerful techniques of newsletter marketing is encouraging subscribers to hit the reply button and e-mail you back. Very few companies do this, and some even go as far as e-mailing you from a 'noreply' address to avoid having to talk to you! While true that starting up a dialogue with customers will require some of your time, it's also one of the easiest ways to connect and establish a real, lasting relationship.

Show your e-mail subscribers that there's a real human behind your e-mails and you will have much better results than all your competitors, who only send out generic "Come and buy!" messages.

### **Automated follow-ups**

Using tracking and analytics, it's possible to learn a lot about your customers. You can easily tell when someone's put an item in their cart but never checked out, when someone hasn't visited your store in 30 days, or what sort of offers a person responds to. You can then e-mail them custom one-to-one messages, tailored to their specific wants and needs.

Amazon is probably the company that is best known for using this technique. Somehow, they seem to know exactly what you want and when you want it. A minority may find this kind of tracking/data analysis a bit creepy, but the fact is it works very well and most customers are just happy to get e-mails that are 100% targeted to them. Just make sure it's easy to opt out.

The more customers and data you have available, the more advanced and effective you can make these systems.

Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Sending out a coupon on their birthday

- Recommending items based on what they have bought previously (or viewed on your site)
- Avoiding shopping cart abandonment by reminding them, and telling them to e-mail you back for assistance if they require it
- Personally thanking them for being loyal customers after they've bought repeatedly from you

## **Loyalty programs**

Maximizing customer loyalty is at the center of every relationship marketing effort. A business that can count on loyal customers to buy from them repeatedly over a long period of time is bound to thrive.

When used in tandem with the other techniques, a good old-fashioned loyalty program can go a long way towards strengthening the relationship between business and customer.

There are many proven techniques that work well to encourage loyalty and repeat buyers:

- Offer a "x% off your n:th purchase" deal
- Send out a coupon to customers who been with you for > 1 year and bought something from you on at least 2 occasions
- Give special rewards to "members only", and have customers register and opt-in for it
- Reward customers who've spent > \$x with you in the last year (you don't need to tell them about this beforehand, just surprise them!)
- Create a VIP program that requires an upfront fee but delivers tremendous value - like Amazon Prime
- Partner with another company to create a unique offering together and promote each other's businesses

## Keep learning and improving

It's very important to realize that relationship marketing is not an event - it's a long journey. Sometimes it will be very difficult to see the benefits of your efforts, but the only way to get good results from it is to power through those challenges.

The best strategy is implementing one method at a time, starting with great customer service and working your way up from there. Make sure you don't bite off more than you can chew. If you're just starting your business, it may be tempting to start tweeting, emailing and Facebooking all at once, but chances are you'll just burn out if you do that.

Remember at all times that the focus should be on providing *value* and being *transparent and relatable* at all times.

A properly executed relationship marketing effort can undoubtedly establish you as the industry leader over time, especially if your competitors are still using techniques more closely resembling old-school transactional marketing.

## Section 2 Takeaways

- Get the fundamentals right first: be relatable, transparent and honest
- Give it time before you start demanding results
- Try to establish a dialogue in all your communications, avoid a one-to-many relationship when possible
- Offer free resources with no strings attached to establish credibility and authority
- Focus on bringing as much value as possible to the lives of your customers
- Accept that it's OK to make mistakes, and it may take some experimenting before you get it right
- Make customer service your #1 priority and put real humans on the front line



## **Section 3: Dealing With Customer Dissatisfaction**

No matter how well you run your company, sooner or later you'll have to deal with a dissatisfied customer. While all businesses should strive to provide good customer service, it's even more important to get it right if you aspire to be successful with relationship marketing.

The key here is to treat every complaint like an opportunity to gain a lifelong proponent of your business. This is your chance to show them how different you are from other companies, and that you actually value them as a customer. Some of the most loyal customers are those that started out on a rocky foundation but had their issue resolved in just the right way.

Most of the advice in this section boils down to the fundamentals discussed earlier: acting less like a company and more like a person, while staying honest, open and respectful.

### **Respond quickly**

An angry customer often has very little patience to sit around waiting for a response. They want their problem resolved, and they want you to make it your highest priority!

Being quick to respond is especially important if a customer is complaining openly on social media, as it may otherwise snowball into a huge mess that's very difficult to get out of. Just one customer with a large following on Twitter can cause a lot of damage to your brand unless you take the complaint seriously.

Also, nothing will impress a customer more than answering an e-mail or Twitter complaint within minutes. If you don't get a lot of complaints, try to keep your inbox open throughout the day and address complaints as soon as they arrive.

## **If possible, handle the issue yourself**

Coming back to the relationship marketing fundamental of acting as a relatable person instead of a faceless corporation, you should whenever possible deal with the most difficult customers personally.

This serves two purposes:

1. It lets the customer know that you are taking his/her complaint very seriously
2. It gives you complete control over the process, leaving less room for poor handling of the complaint

Think about the last time you had to contact the customer service at a large company. How would you react if the CEO personally reached out to you, promising to resolve the issue to your satisfaction? You'd probably feel like you're important to them, and that they care about keeping you as customer.

Of course, in a large corporation the CEO can't be expected to step in and deal with every little issue, but taking an hour a day to deal with the loudest, most pressing complaints may be time well spent.

## **Leave your personal feelings out of it**

This almost goes without saying, but you absolutely must not take any complaints personally. Even if the complaint is about your own job performance. If you can't remove your feelings completely from the situation, you risk making it worse with your involvement. Remember that it's (hopefully) not *you as a person* they're dissatisfied with, but rather the situation as a whole.

Even if you find the complaint to be invalid, it's important to still acknowledge the feelings of your customer. Maybe he or she is having a terrible day in general, and the tiny issue they're having with your product or service now represents everything they're angry about in their lives. If you can turn this into a positive experience for them, perhaps brighten their day a little, you may find yourself with a lifelong customer.

## **Stay honest and own up to mistakes**

While some issues that arise may be due to circumstances out of your control, mistakes do happen and it's important to be able to admit when something is your fault.

This is another relationship marketing fundamental that we're coming back to. A company that is successful with relationship marketing is one that is transparent and honest with their customers. Making mistakes is human, and it makes your company all the more relatable if you can admit when you've made one.

Even if something really isn't your fault, it's important to let the customer know that you will do what you can to resolve it.

A great example is an online store, when a package is lost on its way to a customer. Technically, this is probably not your fault. But the customer doesn't care whose fault it is, he or she just wants it resolved. If all you do is blame the shipping company, never offering your personal assistance to investigate the issue, the customer will probably lose their confidence in you and your business.

## **Offer compensation**

In a small business, every monetary loss hurts. This is especially true when a customer demands a refund, even if they're not technically entitled one.

What you need to consider in this situation is the cost of *not* giving them a refund. Maybe they'll never buy from you again either way, but what will they tell their friends? What will they write in their Twitter feed?

Usually it just makes more sense to offer a refund, maybe even some extra compensation on top if possible, just for the peace of mind. If they still go on Twitter to spew dirt over your company, you can just let everyone know that they have been properly refunded and really have little reason to still be angry with you.

You'll also find that some of these customers will be so impressed by your generosity, they'll not only stay loyal but also tell their friends about you. In this case, a short term loss turns into a long term gain.

## **Dissatisfied customers on social media**

Social media has undoubtedly given more power to consumers than they've ever had before. Whether you consider this a good or bad thing, it's a fact that you must deal with. We've already touched on how important it is to act quickly when customers complain openly on social media, but there are also a couple of other things to keep in mind:

First of all, it probably goes without saying, but you *must* respond to *all* complaints on social media. No response is as bad as a poor response.

Second, keep an open dialogue and don't try to "hide" by making it a private discussion. That will just look suspicious to everyone else who's watching. On a site like Twitter, anywhere from 1 to 1 million people could be following the situation, watching your every move. Not only must you make things right with your customer, you must also make sure *everyone else* notices that the issue is resolved.

Treat it like free advertising - if you solve this problem successfully, lots of other people will see it and get a positive impression of your company.

## **Section 3 Takeaways**

- Treat every complaint or issue as an opportunity to further your relationship marketing efforts
- Always respond to issues as quickly as you can - the longer they're left unresolved, the angrier the customer will be
- Try to handle complaints personally whenever possible
- Be calm and remain professional at all times, even if the customer is very angry with you/your company
- Be honest and transparent, and don't be afraid to admit when you've made a mistake

- Compensate customers whenever possible, even if it means a short term loss for you
- Pay attention to complaints social media - respond quickly and publically

## **Conclusion**

Even if you're new to the concept of relationship marketing, hopefully you've recognized by now that most of it boils down to good customer service and staying in touch with your customers.

Every industry is different, so you'll have to find your own "magic formula" that works for you. Expect to make some mistakes along the way, and don't be afraid to experiment. Realize that you may not see ROI anytime soon on these efforts, but in the long run it will pay off if you keep at it.

Whenever you're in doubt, think of how a huge, multi-national telecom corporation would act. Then, do the opposite.