

# 20 Troop Retention Strategies

The easiest way to grow your Troop is not to lose them, but maybe we should start to look at our scouts as we would a customer. You may be surprised by the comparisons and use of basic customer retention techniques.

The average business loses around 20 percent of its customers annually simply by failing to attend to customer relationships. In some industries this leakage is as high as 80 percent. The cost, in either case, is staggering, but few businesses truly understand the implications. Sound familiar.

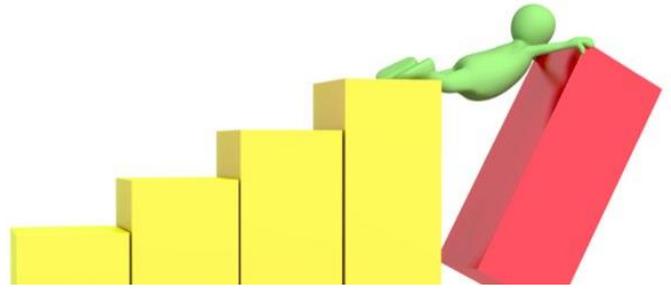
Imagine two businesses (troops), one that retains 90 percent of its customers (scouts), the other retaining 80 percent. If both add new scouts at the rate of 20 percent per year, the first will have a 10 percent net growth in scouts per year, while the other will have none. Over seven years, the first troop will virtually double, while the second will have no real growth. Everything else being equal, that 10-percent advantage in scout retention will result in a doubling of scouts every seven years without doing anything else.

The consequences of scout retention also compound over time, and in sometimes unexpected ways. Even a tiny change in scout retention can cascade through a business system and multiply over time. The resulting effect on long-term profit and growth shouldn't be underestimated.

Now let's review a number of simple customer retention strategies that will cost you little or nothing to implement. Behind each technique listed here there is an in-depth step-by-step process that will increase your customer retention significantly once implemented, and will have a massive impact on your efforts.

## 1. Reducing Attrition

Virtually every troop loses some scouts, but few ever measure or recognize how many of their scouts become inactive. Most units, ironically, invest an enormous amount of time, effort and expense building that initial scout relationship. Then they let that relationship go unattended, in some cases even losing interest as soon as the sale been made, or even worse, they abandon the customer (scout) as soon as an easily remedied problem occurs, only to have to spend another small fortune to replace that customer. The easiest way to grow your business is not to lose your customers. Once you stop the leakage, it's often possible to double or triple your growth



rate because you're no longer forced to make up lost ground just to stand still.

## 2. Sell and then sell again

So many people do an excellent job of making the initial sale (recruiting), then drop the ball and get complacent, ignoring the scout, while they chase more business. Your selling has actually only just begun when someone makes that initial decision to join because virtually everyone is susceptible to buyer's remorse. To lock in that sale, and all of the referrals and repeat business that will flow from it, you need to strike while the iron is hot to allay your scouts' fears and demonstrate by your actions that you really care. You should thank them and remind them again why they've made the right decision to deal with you ... and put a system in place to sell to them again, and again, constantly proving that they made the right decision.

## 3. Bring back the "lost sheep"

There's little point in dedicating massive resources to generating new scouts when 25-60% of your dormant scouts will be receptive to your attempts to regenerate their unit if you approach them the right way, with the right offer. Reactivating scouts who already know you and your product (Scouting) is one of the easiest, quickest ways to increase your revenues (success). Re-contacting and reminding them of your existence, finding out why they're no longer attending, overcoming their objections and demonstrating that you still value and respect them will usually result in a tremendous bounty of retention and drastically increased attendance in a matter of days ... and will lead to some of your best and most loyal scouts.

## 4. Frequent Communications Calendar

Avoid losing your scouts by building relationships and keeping in touch using a rolling calendar of communications. This is a programmed sequence of letters, events, phone calls, "thank you's", special offers, follow-ups, magic moments, and cards or notes with a personal touch, etc. that occur constantly and automatically at defined points in the pre-sales, sales and post-sales process. People not only respond to this positively, they really appreciate it because they feel

valued and important. It acknowledges them, keeps them informed, offsets post-purchase joining doubts, reinforces the reason they're doing business with you and makes them feel part of your business so that they want to come back again and again.

### **5. Extraordinary Customer Service**

The never-ending pursuit of excellence to keep scouts and families so satisfied that they tell others how well they were treated when doing business with you. Moving the product or service you deliver into the realm of the extraordinary by delivering higher than expected levels of service to each and every customer. Key facets include: dedication to customer satisfaction by every employee scout in the troop; providing immediate response; no buck passing; going above and beyond the call of duty; consistent on-time delivery; delivering what you promise before AND after the sale; a zero-defects and error-free-delivery process and recruiting outstanding people to deliver your customer service. Extraordinary service builds fortunes in repeat customers, whereas poor service will drive your customers to your competition.

### **6. Courtesy system**

A powerful system that improves the interpersonal skills of your team and changes the spirit of your organization. It involves speaking to colleagues (leadership) politely and pleasantly, without sarcasm or parody, and treating them at least as well as you would want them to treat your fellow scouts and leaders. This will help your team to feel worthwhile and important, which makes for pleasant social contacts in scouting. It also motivates them to provide extraordinary service, encourages them to be consistently pleasant in all of their dealings and to relate to customers scouts in a warm, human and natural manner. This results in better, warmer, stronger, more trusting relationships and longer term bonds with your unit's scouts and families.

### **7. Product or service integrity**

Long-term success and scout retention belongs to those who do not take ethical shortcuts. There must always be total consistency between what you say and do and what your scout's experience. The design, build quality, reliability and serviceability of your product or service must be of the standard your scouts want, need and expect. Service integrity is also demonstrated by the way you handle the small things, as well as the large. Scouts will be attracted to your unit if you are open and honest

with them, care for them, take a genuine interest in them, don't let them down and practice what you preach ... and they will avoid you if you don't.

### **8. Measure lifetime value**

There's a vast difference between the one-off profit you might make on an average sale, which ignores the bigger picture, and the total aggregate profit your average customer represents over the lifetime of their business relationship with you. Once you recognize how much combined profit a customer scout represents to your business (scouting) when they purchase recharter with your unit again and again, over the months, years or decades, you'll realize the critical importance of taking good care of your customers scouts. And because you'll understand just how much time, effort and expense you can afford to invest in retaining that customer scout, you'll be in control of your marketing expenditure - Successful, productive, leaders with integrity that are making a difference in this old world of ours.

### **9. A complaint is a gift**

96 percent of dissatisfied scouts don't complain. They just walk away, and you'll never know why. That's because they often don't know how to complain, or can't be bothered, or are too frightened, or don't believe it'll make any difference. Whilst they may not tell you what's wrong, they will certainly tell plenty of others. A system for unearthing complaints can therefore be the lifeblood of your unit, because scouts who complain are giving you a gift, they're still talking to you, they're giving you another opportunity to return them to a state of satisfaction and delight them and the manner in which you respond gives you another chance to show what you're made of and create even greater loyalty.

Other customer retention strategies include:

- Blogs
- CRM Systems (*Troopmaster, etc.*)
- Loyalty Programs
- Magic Moments (*Special events*)
- Overcome Buyer's Remorse
- Personal Touches
- Premiums and Gifts (*Trained leaders*)
- Questionnaires and Surveys
- Regular Reviews (*Scoutmaster Conference and Boards of Review*)
- Social Media
- Welcome Book