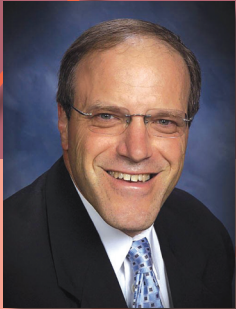


# Signature Press

## CREATING LIFELONG CUSTOMERS



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By **Barry Himmel**  
*Rental Management*

How do you maintain a customer for life? Although this should be every company's goal, a realist might say there is no such thing. Regardless of what you believe, always strive to build loyalty, so your customers always think of your company first when they have rental needs.

Even though you may have trimmed back on services, that does not mean you can't refine and enhance relationships with your existing customers. There are still many ways you can exceed customer expectations and let them know how much you value their business.

Customer satisfaction is no longer good enough. A Harvard Business Review study indicated that 80 percent of all customers who left for a competitor report being "satisfied" with the previous company. There are many businesses with a customer satisfaction model, but satisfaction alone will not result in life-long customers that will passionately support your company and cheerfully recommend it to others.

Here are a few of the many things you can do to help build that kind of loyalty. You will notice that other than time, few additional resources are necessary to execute these tasks.

- **Focus on the relationship.** Get to know the customers and their needs. Develop a relationship so that it's more than business. For example, learn about the customers' hobbies, families and interests, so they think of you as a friend who they enjoy working with and not just a business partner.

- **Go above and beyond.** What are you doing to exceed expectations and wow customers? Simple things such as a follow-up call or thank you notes can make all the difference.

- **Go visit the customer.** Many relationships today are simply over the phone or via e-mail. Where appropriate, take the time to go to the customers' site, even when you don't have anything to sell or rent. They will appreciate that you took the time to visit.

Building a life-long customer is not a quick or easy process. It requires a commitment, culture and strategy. This process must be embraced by all of your employees so that the customer knows they come first and are more than a piece of business.

There are few things in business as gratifying as a loyal, life-long customer — knowing that they personally care for you and care for your business. Don't stop at building just a satisfied customer base!