



# Customers for Life: How to Turn That One-Time Buyer Into a Lifetime Customer

*Carl Sewell , Paul B. Brown*

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**Customers for Life: How to Turn That One-Time Buyer Into a Lifetime Customer** Carl Sewell , Paul B. Brown

**In this completely revised and updated edition of the customer service classic, Carl Sewell enhances his time-tested advice with fresh ideas and new examples and explains how the groundbreaking "Ten Commandments of Customer Service" apply to today's world.**

Drawing on his incredible success in transforming his Dallas Cadillac dealership into the second largest in America, Carl Sewell revealed the secret of getting customers to return again and again in the original *Customers for Life*. A lively, down-to-earth narrative, it set the standard for customer service excellence and became a perennial bestseller. Building on that solid foundation, this expanded edition features five completely new chapters, as well as significant additions to the original material, based on the lessons Sewell has learned over the last ten years.

Sewell focuses on the expectations and demands of contemporary consumers and employees, showing that businesses can remain committed to quality service in the fast-paced new millennium by sticking to his time-proven approach: Figure out what customers want and make sure they get it. His "Ten Commandants" provide the essential guidelines, including:

- Underpromise, overdeliver: Never disappoint your customers by charging them more than they planned. Always beat your estimate or throw in an extra service free of charge.
- No complaints? Something's wrong: If you never ask your customers what else they want, how are you going to give it to them?
- Measure everything: Telling your employees to do their best won't work if you don't know how they can improve.

## Customers for Life: How to Turn That One-Time Buyer Into a Lifetime Customer Details

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## From Reader Review Customers for Life: How to Turn That One-Time Buyer Into a Lifetime Customer for online ebook

## Dmitry Kuriakov says

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## Paul Szydowski says

One story in this book - about the cost of debating the value of a customers shirt that was damaged when it was left in a car's trunk during service - was the basis of my entire approach to satisfying every customer complaint when I owned my dry cleaning business. You may win the argument, but the customer will win the battle because a business cannot follow them around rebutting their story - so you'd better make sure that story paints you in the most positive light possible.

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## Denis Kinashever says

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## Maryna says

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### Mikhail Konstantinov says

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### Glenn Gray says

Readers who don't believe in the "business value" of customer service would do well to read this book. The author does an exceptional job communicating how his passion for treating people consistently with the golden rule can lead to business success and be measured by objective business performance metrics. Very short chapters make for a very quick read.

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### Olena Pravylo says

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### Chad Warner says

Helpful customer service advice based on real-world experience. I like how practical the advice is, because it comes from years of firsthand experience with a successful business that scores high on customer service. It's easy to read, with plenty of examples, and helpful checklists at the end of each chapter. It's a bit repetitive, and Sewell likes to brag.

It's clear that Sewell excels at identifying problems, solving them, and continuously improving. I love processes and systems, so I like the emphasis on systems. Sewell says that 20% of customer service is being nice to people, and 80% is devising systems that allow you to do the job right the first time and give the customer what he wants every time.

Even though he sells cars and car-related services, many of the lessons are applicable to any business. A good portion of the advice relates to brick-and-mortar businesses that customers visit, so some of the lessons aren't directly applicable to an online business like mine.

Sewell owns car dealerships and he expanded his business from \$10 million to \$250 million. He realized that your product isn't enough; you must add something to the process by removing the hassle and making the customer's life as pleasant as you know how. He found that the only way to set your business apart from

others is through superior service.

The book explores Sewell's 10 Commandments of Customer Service:

1. Ask customers what they want and give it to them again and again.
2. Systems, not smiles. Saying please and thank you doesn't ensure you'll do the job right first time, every time. Only systems guarantee you that.
3. Under promise, over deliver. Customers expect you to keep your word. Exceed it.
4. When the customer asks the answer is always 'yes.' Period.
5. Fire your inspectors and consumer relations department. Every employee who deals with clients must have the authority to handle complaints.
6. No complaints? Something's wrong. Encourage your customers to tell you what you're doing wrong.
7. Measure everything.
8. Salaries are unfair. Pay people like partners.
9. Show people respect. Be polite.
10. Learn how the best really do it; make their systems your own. Then improve them.

I disagree with Sewell's approach to letting customers set your working hours, and making employees work evenings, weekends, and holidays to accommodate. He says, "Does the customer care that we might be late for dinner? No, and what the customer wants is the only thing that matters." I disagree that that's the only thing that matters. What about respecting the personal time of your employees? In another place he praises an employee who consistently worked 100-hour weeks and moved his family to a different country for a work project. Do the personal lives of this man and his family matter at all? In another place he says, "People who leave on time, take all their days off, and can't take a joke don't do well here." He doesn't even want them to take their vacation days! When he says, "Our people are just as important as our customers, and they need to be treated just as well," this rings hollow because of what he advocates elsewhere.

I read this because I'm working on making customer service at my website design agency, OptimWise, even better.

## **Notes**

### **What's New?**

You can no longer say to your customers, "Please choose between low prices and good service." They'll respond, "I want both."

### **The customer will tell you how to provide good service**

Identify the three things that are most important to the customer. Measure them, to make sure you're providing them.

Create a short questionnaire (3, at most 5, questions) that focuses on the most important parts of doing business from the customer's perspective.

### **If the customer asks, the answer is always yes**

If the customer asks if you can do something for him, the answer is always yes, providing the request is somehow related to your business.

Our job is to take care of the customer so well that he keeps coming back for the rest of his life.

Help your customer. Don't charge for "extra" service if you can help it. If it's something a friend would do for another friend, don't charge. Don't worry, you'll more than make up the money in future business.

**There's no such thing as after hours**

How can we be giving customers the best service if we're forcing them to conform to our schedule? By definition, that has to be inconvenient for them sometimes. We have to work when they want us to, not when we want to.

Let customers call you no matter what time it is. You want to take care of them and prevent them from going to someone else. Some customers take advantage of this, but not many.

If customer needs help, provide it, no matter what time it is. It gives you a chance to maintain your relationship by doing something for him, and people really like the service.

**Under promise, over deliver.**

Don't rip people off. "You can shear a sheep for many years, but you can only skin it once." Customer will eventually figure out he's being skinned, and you'll never see him again.

If actual cost is less than estimate, charge the lower amount. Keeping the difference is not as good as keeping the customer.

Throw in some extras if you can. Cushion your estimates to allow for this.

**Systems, not smiles**

20% of customer service is being nice to people. 80% is devising systems that allow you to do the job right the first time and give customer what he wants every time.

**Do it right the first time**

Best system for customer service: do what you say you're going to do, and do it right the first time. Keeping your word is worth more than all the empathy, smiles, chocolates in the world.

Anything that makes life a little easier for the customer will make us more profitable. It gives the customer another reason to keep doing business with us.

**When something goes wrong**

Sincerely apologize, then fix the problem immediately.

Make a big deal out of being wrong. Mistake should not have happened. No matter what the problem is, it's a very big deal to the customer.

When you screw up on your first interaction with the customer, he thinks you've screwed up 100% of the time. He doesn't want to hear about your 99.6% success rate, or how few complaints you get.

Everybody has a bad day. If customer loses temper, forgive them. Make them feel comfortable about coming back.

**Q: Who's more important? Your customer or your employee? A: Both.**

"Our people are just as important as our customers, and they need to be treated just as well."

**The customer isn't always right.**

Customer isn't always and absolutely right no matter what.

When the amounts are small, customer is always right.

When customer thinks you messed up, if you want to keep their business, give customers exactly what they asked for - or even more - without any hesitation. If you do anything less, you might as well offer them nothing, because you'll have lost their good will. Don't haggle over the amount, and be cheerful; don't roll eyes or be sarcastic.

It's okay - to a certain point - to let customer take advantage of you. But if someone is trying to take extreme advantage of you, evaluate whether it's worth it.

Goal: do whatever it takes to keep customer coming back.

### **How to teach customers to get the best service**

Teach customers how to get the best service: when is a good time to see you; what they need to tell you to get the job done right the first time, etc.

Explain to customers how you do things. Once they understand you have systems - and the systems work - they're bound to think better of you and want to come back.

### **Creating frequent buyers**

Have a frequent buyer program, modeled after airlines. Do all the paperwork so customers don't have to track anything. These programs aren't a waste of money; they give people reasons to keep doing business with you.

Send thank-you notes to customers. People like to be thanked for their business. Say thank you every chance you get.

### **Accounting for more than money**

*Performance measurement questions*

- Is the measurement important? If you stopped tracking the data, would anybody care? If improved, would this measure have a significant impact on the company?
- Is the measurement easy to track?
- Will employees understand the measurement?
- Is the measurement stated in positive terms? People would rather shoot for a goal than avoid making a mistake.

### **Your mother was right: manners really are important**

Treat people - customers and employees - just as we treat our children, parents, spouses, friends.

Your product isn't enough. Add something to the process by removing the hassle and making the customer's life as pleasant as you know how.

### **Speak softly but ...**

In advertising, show rather than tell. Specific beats general every time. Don't say you have the friendliest people. Give examples of what they've done, or will do, for customers. Let customers conclude that you have best service in town.

### **The \$332,000 Customer**

"Do everything in your power to make the first experience of dealing with you - and every subsequent one -

as pleasant as possible. If you do, they'll come back. If you need to be motivated, think about all the money that customer could spend with you in the course of a lifetime."

**How to be forgiven your trespasses**

You don't have to buy people off. A sincere apology and correcting the problem immediately should almost always take care of the problem.

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**Artem says**

It's a nice read for all salesmen and management in B2B industries.  
The author shares his experience of how to build top notch customer service.  
I found his ideas are very practical and easy to implement.

If this topic is interesting for you, I do recommend to read this book.

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**Ilya Konokhov says**

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