



TEN WAYS

to add value to your customers

If you, or your team, only contact customers when you are selling to them, you're reinforcing the idea that the only time they need to speak to you is when they have a pre-determined need to buy. That's not great for relationship building, nor for moving the perception of print from a commodity purchase to a key element of a marketing campaign. Instead, try these ten ways to cement your role as a valued and trusted partner;

1

Become familiar with their company culture, vision, and goals

This will give you a greater understanding of them and uncover ways you can do more business together. For example, if they plan to grow or re-locate, how can your products and services support that? What could you offer to make their life easier and help them achieve these plans?

2

Identify and suggest ways to improve the products and services they buy from you

The evolution of print applications and equipment mean that we always have new things to shout about. Don't assume that your customers are aware of these. Regularly review what they buy to see if it might be produced more innovatively, more quickly, or in a more cost-effective way. If you don't, a competitor just might.

3

Look for opportunities to recommend and refer them to others

It's in your own business's interest that your customers thrive and are successful. Think of those within your network that they might profitably trade with and introduce and endorse them, when appropriate. The added benefit is that they may well reciprocate.



4

Connect with them on social media, share your reach and their content

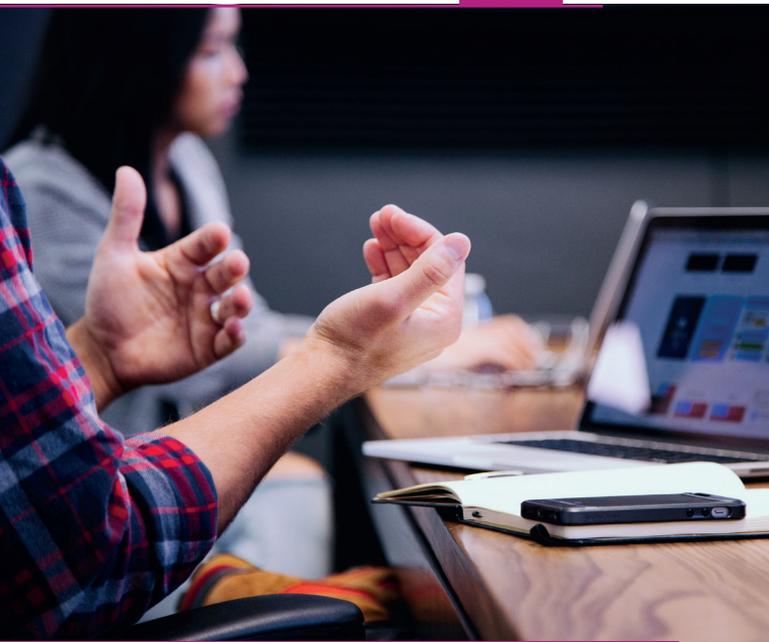
Following them and interacting with their social media posts has many benefits. It keeps you abreast of what they're doing, provides opportunity to engage with them at a deeper level, and publicly demonstrates your support.

5

Highlight news that may impact or be of interest to them

Keep your customers' best interests in mind and look out for relevant news they should know about. For example, changes to mailing costs, data legislation, etc. Even if they are already aware, it evidences your understanding of their business and the value you attach to the relationship.





REMEMBER...



Become familiar with their vision and goals



Regularly ask for feedback on your service



Always look for ways to over-deliver

6 Spend more time talking about their business than your own

However good the supplier/customer relationship, remember that not all partnerships are created equal. Your customer is the most important party and, effectively, has the most power. Be aware of that and reflect it in all your dealings and conversations by listening far more than you talk.

7 Communicate with them when and how they prefer

With so many channels available, choosing the best one for an individual customer can be tricky. Millennials rarely answer unscheduled telephone calls preferring messaging and chat, while overuse of email means many go unread, even unopened. Ask individual customers their preferences and respect them.

8 Ask for feedback on your service levels and review their satisfaction with you

Never let your customer act as your quality control function. Don't assume that "no news is good news" and that your customer is happy, or you would have heard otherwise. It's important to ask, regularly, how you're doing and how you can improve. View all criticism as constructive and act on it swiftly.



This article is one of a series supporting the **Canon Ascent Programme**, a business development initiative for Canon Professional Print customers. If you'd like to know more please contact your Canon Account Manager or search "Canon Ascent Programme".

9 Share useful insight and best-practice

Work that you've produced for one customer – an effective product or a successful campaign – might provide great learning for others in your customer base. Regularly share case studies, exciting samples, formats and creative ideas to inform and inspire.

10 Find ways to over-deliver

Over-delivery doesn't mean cutting costs or giving things away for free. Instead think of exceeding a customer's expectations by delivering earlier than anticipated when you can; sending a hand-written thank-you note for doing business with you; remembering their birthday and sending a card. There are myriad small ways that make them feel good about choosing to work with you.

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In short, make it all about them and not about you!
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SUGGESTED READING:

Dale Carnegie; *How to Win Friends & Influence People*
Gary Vaynerchuk; *The Thank You Economy*