

# Small Business News & Notes



## Grow Your Business Through Customer Connections

(NAPSA)—Long gone is the time when customer purchase patterns were streamlined and predictable. Today's shoppers are smarter, and there are multiple forces at work, including social media and paid advertising, which constantly influence customer decisions. Knowing your customers' likes and dislikes is the only way to ensure your business stays top of mind throughout the buying cycle and beyond.

This is especially important for small-to-medium-sized businesses. It is much more cost effective to keep an existing customer than obtain a new one. According to a study by The Rockefeller Foundation, 68 percent of customers will leave a business if they do not feel cared about or appreciated. Deepening customer relationships will save you money, time and effort in the long run—and it will keep valuable customers coming back.

How are those relationships built? Much like any relationship, they're built through attention, effort and being proactive. A recent survey conducted by Microsoft revealed that more than half of consumers want to connect with their favorite brands on a monthly or bimonthly basis. Another 18 percent said they would prefer weekly or daily interactions. The survey also found 64 percent of consumers think it's important or very important for a brand to understand their buying preferences and expectations.

In short, customers expect you to understand their needs and act on them. To win in a modern world where your competition is down the street and online, you must become obsessed with your customers and demonstrate your obsession often.

Building customer connections can be easier than you think. Start with these three tips:



### Customers today want to feel a connection with the companies they patronize.

- **Exceed expectations.** Ask yourself what more you could be doing to go above and beyond for your customers. People want value in what they buy and they want to be valued by you. This could mean giving something to customers without seeing an immediate return for your business.
- **Prioritize customer service.** When asked what keeps them loyal to one brand over another, nearly a third of survey respondents said they valued customer service over incentives. Focus on improving service by encouraging responsiveness and solution finding.
- **Use the digital landscape.** Social media is arguably the most powerful way to engage customers. Remember, people want to hear from you, so don't be afraid to engage directly on multiple channels to show them you care. Be authentic. You'll be amazed at the results.

Microsoft's Dynamics 365 is a valuable tool that will help you prioritize your customer's needs. You can try out the free 30-day trial to get to know your customers better.

To help you learn what steps you can take right now to inspire customer loyalty, there's an interactive guide available at <https://aka.ms/smbguide/register>.