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SMALL BUSINESS

How Small Businesses Can Increase Customer Loyalty & Branding

Online Survey Reveals 74 Percent of Consumers Think More Positively About Sending Company and 87 Percent Report Increased Brand Loyalty

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Businesses that want to get closer to their customers should remember and acknowledge customer birthdays, anniversaries and other events, according to the latest online survey conducted by analytics and marketing technology provider [Fulcrum](#).

The survey found that 74 percent of consumers who received birthday messages from a company they do business with thought more positively of the company afterwards. Eighty-eight percent of those positive reactions translated to increased brand loyalty.

Shoppers responded most positively to birthday greetings from the food and beverage industry, such as Baskin Robbins, Ruby Tuesdays or Starbucks. Ninety-two

percent of consumers receiving greetings from such food and beverage establishments thought more positively about the sending company, and 96 percent reported an increase in loyalty.

While these examples are from large chains, similar studies have shown that even small businesses can benefit from inexpensive customer relationship and marketing systems. Online options from such companies as Constant Contact, Campaigner and Vertical Response, automate the email functions, as well as have the ability to remember customer birthdays and other information.

While nearly all birthday greetings received favorable consumer responses, those which included discounts positively influenced the greatest number of survey respondents. Greetings that included some type of discount or gift were 24 percent more effective in positively impacting consumer opinion than simple birthday greetings (87 percent and 70 percent, respectively).

“While marketers who recognize their customers' birthdays assume the message creates an even stronger relationship with them, our consumer research confirms the positive influence on both the brand's image and future sales to that customer,” said Tara Piazza, senior vice president, Fulcrum. “Firms deploying campaigns to celebrate their customers' birthdays tighten consumer relationships while also creating the opportunity to market additional products and services.”

The online survey was conducted earlier this year based on interviews with 500 consumers.

Age played a decisive role in how birthday greetings impacted brand loyalty. Consumers between the ages of 25 and 34 were far more likely to report increased loyalty, at 92 percent, compared to those ages 55 and up among whom just 73 percent reported increased loyalty. Income level and gender played significantly smaller roles in differentiating consumer responses.

Consumers not receiving birthday greetings generally have opted out of such communications, refused to provide contact information, or possibly have been ignored by companies they purchase from. The survey results suggest that these companies are missing out on a strong opportunity to engage with customer in a very influential way. Marketers who practice the birthday campaign can attest to the fact that birthday greetings generally have the highest click and conversation rate among all operational emails; they are essentially cost-free and lack the risk of a negative consumer response.

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