

# LIGA COLLEGE

## HOW TO RETAIN YOUR CUSTOMER BASE DURING THE SECOND LOCKDOWN



### Profile your customers

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This new lockdown brings new unprecedented challenges. I've compiled some tips to help keep hold of your customers during this time.

#### 1. Clearly understanding your customer base.

Which customers are currently profitable for you?  
Which Customers have the potential to be profitable in future?  
Which customers could help you attract other profitable customers ?  
Then prioritise their retention in your Business Plan.

#### 2. Check if your customers want something different now

Following lockdown, what your customers used to want - or even wanted during lockdown - might not be what they want now. Lockdown forced people to behave completely differently and their needs and wants changed as a result. Many businesses went to huge efforts to adapt to meet these needs.

### Lockdown woes

Once this second lockdown is lifted, things aren't necessarily going straight back to what they were. This is partly because: The environment is still potentially different with some restrictions still in place, new guidelines in force and possibly examples of local lockdowns, which means many customers simply can't go back to how they were before. People have had time to question their old habits and in spite of the inconvenience of lockdown, they've found some positives they'd like to keep, so they're choosing to engage differently with businesses.

#### Talk to your customers find out exactly what they need

Here small businesses have the edge, as it's relatively easy to chat directly with individual customers face-to-face, over the phone or by email and ask them for their thoughts and ideas. And to get a wider sample, you can use your social media pages or email database to run a quick poll or link to an online survey. Gather feedback to help you answer the following questions: What will give customers a good reason to stay with you? E.g. if you provided home deliveries of essentials such as milk during lockdown, work out why are customers still better staying with you if supermarkets are open again and your product is more expensive? Perhaps it's a more comprehensive product range, a more environmentally friendly and ethical product, or a guarantee of priority service in case of future lockdowns.

LOCKDOWN

Lockdown Options

Should you still offer any of the new options you provided during lockdown? For example, if you switched from face-to-face to online classes, will some customers now want these instead going forward?

Do you need to change your processes, product range or pricing? If you have to introduce a delivery charge to maintain profitability, can you improve the whole delivery service, so customers feel it's reasonable to pay?

Do your customers have any new needs that could provide a new opportunity? In this instance it might be worth considering diversifying what you offer.

3. Thank customers (and never 'guilt' them)

Most customers appreciate being thanked and this is something else that small businesses can do much better than larger organisations. Who to thank

You may want to thank different customers in different ways:

All customers on every order or transaction

Regular and long-term customers

High value customers

Those who have supported directly or indirectly e.g. through positive reviews, social media comments, constructive feedback, etc.



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CUSTOMER RETENTION

CONT.

How to thank them

While an automated email thank you is still worthwhile, a personal 'thank you' has real impact. This needs a little time but hardly any budget. What matters here is authenticity - genuine thought and care.

Thank customers face-to-face: Make a point when they're next at the till, or you're in a video conference, of thanking them for their support and how valuable it's been. It's also a good opportunity to ask for any feedback as discussed above.

Alternatively, a personal video message from the business owner would be a lovely gesture at the moment when seeing customers face-to-face can be a challenge.

A hand-written note: Digital channels are increasingly important but sometimes a real personal touch like this can have more cut-through, especially if the message references something specific to the customer and what they buy from you.

Surprise gifts: The key thing here is the surprise - rather than an impersonal offer of 'if you spend £50 we will give you something'. This doesn't need to be expensive. It's about the gesture and ideally something you know the customer would appreciate. E.g. a luxury chocolate, a small bag of sweets, some free samples, or an extra item of something your customer regularly buys. If it's a proper surprise, it doesn't create an expectation that you do this every time.

To complement the personal approach many businesses also look to build loyalty programmes. These can be as simple as promotions or discounts for regular customers. Basic stamp cards can be very effective, where, after buying a certain number of items such as coffees, greetings cards or pairs of shoes, the customer is entitled to a free item or discount.

Avoid guilt

When customers buy local it can bring great benefits for the wider community and the environment.

But sadly, it's quite common to hear business owners making comments to customers that they 'should' buy local. And for those businesses that have moved mountains to support customers during lockdown, it is understandable that owners feel this way! However, this view is best left unsaid as making customers feel guilty can alienate them. Customers do not view businesses as charities and will only stick with them if they offer what they want and need and put them at the heart of the service.



New ways of thinking are needed in these unprecedented times

## LOCKDOWN

*Making business easy*

Even if you offer the most amazing product or service, customers will be reluctant to stay if it's hard to carry out basic transactions.

Make sure you understand how your customers want to interact with you when they choose and pay for your product or service, whether that's face-to-face, over the phone or online.

For some businesses moving to online ordering and payments can seem daunting.

Don't be put off by thinking that big businesses will always have the edge here. Some famous and long established brands have eCommerce sites which are not performing well at all due to complexity and legacy IT systems. Some micro businesses are now leapfrogging these large brands when it comes to user experience by using simple off the shelf functionality for eCommerce or online booking.

**5. Ensure staff understand their important role**

The key to success is ensuring that all customers have a consistent welcoming experience every time they transact with you. Therefore, every member of staff must fully understand and implement your approach to retention.

Staff will bring valuable insight and ideas to improve customer service so remember to ask them for feedback as often as you ask your customers, and involve them in shaping and owning the overall approach. A simple way to keep customer retention top of your priorities is by including it as a specific agenda item in every weekly catch-up.



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