Earn People's Loyalty: Here's How

Building the loyalty of your supporters is the most important thing you can do.

BY ROBERT B. TUCKER

You're probably familiar with the fact that poor service is the leading reason why customers don't come back. But consider this recent finding: 65-85% of customers who leave claim to have been satisfied. Clearly, merely satisfying customers is not enough to win their loyalty.

Nonprofits are often so concerned about attracting new people that they neglect existing relationships. They focus on chasing down new donors and funders rather than building the loyalty of those they already have.

How can you create a higher rate of loyalty among your donors, funders, clients, volunteers, and other stakeholders? Here are strategies that can help you increase long-term loyalty:

- **Gather strategic information on your customers.** It's sometimes said that technology has made our world impersonal. But today, technology is increasingly being used to build a stronger bond. By building up a database of your customers, you'll learn some amazing things. You may even discover just how wrong you've been about who exactly your customers are.
- **Discover and meet the needs of your customers.** Informal focus groups in which customers come together over a meal or a round of golf can be especially effective.
- **Create a loyalty program.** Offer special incentives to long-term customers.
- **Define what is special about the way you meet your customers' needs.** Reminding customers of the ways you are addressing their special needs reestablishes the bond that provides the basis for loyalty over time. Survey your customers often to determine which ones to target and what their needs are.
- **Look for patterns of discontent among defectors.** Defectors are, in effect, vetoing your value proposition, meaning they don't like your quality or your service. It's important to know why they have become ex-customers. Create a system to gather insights from them that you can analyze for patterns, trends, areas of improvement.

You may discover how wrong you've been about who your customers are.

In today's hyper-competitive nonprofit environment, every leader must focus on achieving greater loyalty. Isn't it worth reviewing how you retain your customers over time?

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Five Steps to Start Measuring Your Outcomes

PART 2 OF A SERIES

Are your services accomplishing their purpose? Here's how to be sure.

BY JEAN A. VOGT

If you read and embraced the first article in this series ("Is Outcome Measurement Dead?"), you've committed yourself to assuring that your organization's services achieve the desired results. What's the best way to put that commitment into action?

There are five steps you must take to get your outcome measurement system started:

STEP 1: Fine-tune Your Mission Statement.

Get out your mission statement. "Where is it?" you ask? If you've followed the advice in "Demystifying the Mission Statement" (see "Selected References"), your mission statement is included in your bylaws and conspicuously displayed throughout your organization—on desk plaques, in your front lobby, on business cards.

But what if you haven't revisited your mission lately? Then it's time to involve key staff and board to recraft this guiding principle. Remember, your mission statement is your organization's reason for existence—the source from which all of your organizational plans, dreams, strategies, objectives, policies, and *outcomes* flow.

Your mission statement should answer three questions: (1) What services do you provide? (2) To what target population? (3) For what purpose? It is that third element—the organization's purpose for existing—that's missing from many mission statements. Be sure your mission statement contains these three essential elements and is up to date. Once your board has approved your revised mission statement, you're ready to use it in Step 2.

STEP 2: Develop Admission Criteria.

If your mission statement defines your target population specifically enough, the work of developing admission criteria is mostly done. For example, if your mission says you serve "adults with disabilities in the AnyCounty area," it's clear you don't serve children, nor adults outside the AnyCounty area. But are there other criteria?

Figure 1. Who Are Your Stakeholders?

Type of Stakeholder	Stakeholder
Consumers of your goods and services	Those you serve, your target population as specified in your mission statement Family members of those you serve Consumers of any commercial products or services
People or groups who buy those services	Funding sources/government purchasers Consumers themselves or families (self pay) Donors Insurance companies
People or groups who decide whether to buy services from your organization	Referral sources Gatekeepers
Those who have a significant interest in your organization	Governing body Advisory committees Staff members Other related providers of service

Figure 2. What Do Your Stakeholders Want from You?

Stakeholder	Possible Stakeholder Wants and Expectations
Consumers of your service	A place to be comfortable Improved quality of life Greater independence
Family members of consumers of your services	Safety for consumers Improved quality of life for consumers Reasonable expense, if directly paying for service
Consumers of commercial products or services	Product or service that meets their specifications Timely delivery Reasonable price
Funding sources	Reasonable price Service that meets their specifications Outcomes for people served Minimal time to accomplish outcomes Value
Donors	Prudent use of their donation Tax write off Outcomes for people served
Referral Sources	Outcomes for people referred Timely response to referral
Governing Body/Advisory Committees	Prudent management Fiscal accountability Positive community image
Staff Members	Opportunity for input into your organization Ownership in your organization's mission Opportunity to learn and grow Competitive wages and benefits
Other Related Providers of Service	Cooperative working relationship Easy accessibility of your organization's staff members

Perhaps! Must the people you serve be able to transport themselves? Take care of their own personal needs? Be willing to accept other conditions? If so, add these criteria to further clarify who you serve.

STEP 3: Provide Mission & Criteria for Each Program.

It's important to establish a mission statement and admission criteria for *each* program you provide to those you serve. For example, say you provide in-home personal care services *and* transportation services. Each of these is a separate program and needs separate mission statements and admission criteria.

STEP 4: List Your Stakeholders.

Your stakeholders are (1) the *consumers* of your goods and services, (2) those *who buy* those services, (3) those *who decide* whether they should buy your services, and (4) those who have a *significant interest* in your organization. Most nonprofit organizations will come up with a list of stakeholders similar to Figure 1.

STEP 5: Pinpoint Your Stakeholders' Wants & Needs.

Your next job is to find out what each of your stakeholders wants, needs, and expects. You can do so in a number of ways: individualized surveys of each of your stakeholders, focus groups, community surveys, funding contracts, and so on. Through one or more of these mechanisms, you will come up with something similar to Figure 2.

You're now well on your way to developing your own outcome measurement system. When we visit again in the next issue of *Nonprofit World*, we'll discuss outcome measures in more detail, including how to involve your stakeholders, collect data, and create a

Stay Tuned

Watch for the next article in our series. It will provide a sample outcome measurement report which you can use to evaluate any of your programs.

true picture of your performance in relation to your mission.

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*Available from the Society for Nonprofit Organizations' *Resource Center Catalog*, included in this issue, or contact the Society at 6314 Odana Road, Suite 1, Madison, Wisconsin 53719 (800-424-7367). See page 22 of this issue.

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