

Your Top Tips On How To Get Repeat Customers

by Andrew Whitfield



Selling on-line in an extremely competitive environment can be very difficult to stay ahead especially if your product or service is in a high-volume arena where price competition is traditionally seen as the main driver to complete a sale.

I see many business owners that are transaction lead, in other words they sell to one person and never communicate, market or see that person again. And if that customer does purchase again from their business they wouldn't even recognise the fact that they have had a repeat customer.

Some analysts involved in CRM systems (customer relationship management) state that it typically costs up to 8 times as much to find and sell to a new customer as it does to sell to an existing customer, therefore the importance of retaining as many customers as possible should be very high on your list of priorities.

If you are already selling on platforms such as eBay, Amazon, or one of the many others, you will know that it is quite frustrating that you are not able to market directly to them through the email. Both eBay and Amazon have very strict rules and policies governing the use of personal information and also with Amazon you are never given the customer's personal email address.

So you may ask, how can I drive that customer to my website or direct them again back to your trading platform whether it is eBay Amazon or one of the others?

So here we go with the top tips:

1: Your visibility to a customer is massively important

Ensure you have put all of your contact information in your very straightforward and simplified customer return and/or customer service policy pages on each platform.

'A note of caution': when putting the detail into the relevant pages ensure you are also complying with the policies, terms and conditions of your agreement with the selling platform. There are certain areas where you can put contact details and there are certain areas where you are not permitted to put email addresses or telephone numbers, their policies may change on a regular basis therefore always look at the help pages online to ensure you policy compliant.

- **Telephone Number:** try use a "landline" not on 0845, 090, 0800 number for the UK or toll-free for other countries as they may be charging high rates to customers using mobiles; this may deter a customer making contact with you, losing you a potential sale.
- **Email address:** where possible make it personal, instead of sales@, customer-service@ or complaints@, try and use a person's name or if you do have to use a generic term trying make it is friendly as possible. Your email address should also have your business website as part of the address, mine is Andrew@howtosellonlineLtd.com. Therefore any reasonably well-informed customer will be able to find my website very easily.
- **Generic Email:** If you are still using Gmail, AOL, Yahoo or any one of the other email providers it may be time to invest in a small website domain name, even if you do not sell through it as this will make you look more professional.
- **Website:** this is a tricky one, as the platforms do not like you to divert potential customers or traffic away from their site as they will undoubtedly lose a sale and the fee charged. So we go back to your email address as indicated above, or consider the two points below.
- **Shop Name:** Each site that you trade on will allow you to have a trading name or shop name, this name should form the name of your website. However you will not be allowed to have it titled www. or appended .com/.co.uk etc at the end. Therefore if I was trading on eBay or Amazon I would have my business title as "howtosellonlineLtd" which would give my potential customer the opportunity to make contact as most people would recognise the construction of the name of the shop to be that of a website.
- **Address:** avoid using PO boxes wherever you can, if you're working from your residential address use your business name as well as the house number. It is worth checking on the your postal service website to see how your address appears as it may be able to be shortened or lengthened to disguise the fact that you're working from home. The address should be clearly visible to all customers as this can instill an element of trust.

By making sure that your business details are clearly visible (along with your feedback and customer service metrics) this shows that you are a focused, customer driven online seller. You are giving potential customers a feeling that they can trust you and will treat them as a valued purchaser.

Visit the main website www.h2so.org

They are then potentially likely to discuss their purchase with friends, work colleagues or family. This may just mean that you will get an additional sale, either through your selling platform or directly through your website.

1: Make yourself memorable

Each time you send a parcel to a customer go that little extra mile to make yourself memorable. There are a number of ways of doing this; here are a couple of the favourites.

- **Send them a free gift with their order.** This does not need to be massive in expenditure, one of my marketing campaigns involved sending prospective customers a chocolate bar in gold foil and wrapped in a £50 note (not real) with our “call to action” and contact details. It generated a massive number of enquiries!
- **A free gift can be anything** - lollipop, personalised pen etc. I have seen sachets of coffee, individual teabags, mugs, business cardholders - there are a whole host of things out there that you can choose from. What you need to do is make it relevant to your business so they have a “wow” factor that will potentially make for a quick repeat order.
- **Enclose an offer that is too good to be believed.** It may be a voucher for a percentage off the next purchase through your website. If you use this method it may be an idea to make the voucher and offer so good they need to do it there and then to take advantage of it. You may limit the time or the number of products available on that offer the call to action is an immediate response required. This is very effective way to build up your database of customers to market to in the future.
- **There are many ways of offering a discount** on a product. It is always worth having live product across all your platforms at full retail price, so that the discount you are offering is real. If you have products sitting on the shelf which needs to be moved this may be an excellent way to turn it back into cash. You may strike a deal with one of your suppliers for a new product that has a repeat purchase value, so making it a “no-brainer” offer - a brilliant tactic.

In using these tactics I am of course assuming that you have some sort of CRM system or opt-in system on your website that allows the customer to register and agree to have future contact from you either by email, post or telephone.

Obviously, to get the offer, they have to go through your website and complete the registration; however they will always have the option not to receive any further marketing material from you by un-subscribing. You will also need to consider the data protection regulations in the jurisdiction you are operating.

MAKE THE OFFER EXTREMELY BOLD - you may have an item that has a £20 retail price and offer it to your customers for £1. You may look at this and think “madness”, especially if you’re offering free shipping...

However look at it as part of your marketing budget to grow your customer base with a list of willing customers that you can market to in the future. This may be the reason to have your offer time and/or quantity limited. However the impact on your business could be as massive as the £50 chocolate bar exercise I did a few years ago.

3: Communication is key

- **Communication normally starts before** the customer even receives the item they have purchased. If they have a pre-purchase question they will expect a fairly swift reply; by all means use a pre-written standard reply template to copy and paste frequent replies to general questions, but on each one of those be sure to personalise it. This may be as little as putting their name at the top of the message or a very small paragraph dealing directly with the subject matter.
- **During this pre-delivery period ensure you** have clear responses to guide them through the delivery process, send emails to say the item has been dispatched with the courier and tracking details where applicable. If you are using a courier service that offers “real time” tracking opportunities then ensure your customer is getting that information.
- **This level of communication ensures** that when they open the packet and find your leaflet with a special offer, they are going to be more than impressed. And you have an extremely good chance of getting a very quick repeat sale if your offer is good enough.



- **If you are using a good quality CRM system** you may also be in a position to ask for feedback directly from your new customer within a few days of the delivery being made. To do this you could use something like “SurveyMonkey.com”. Make sure you have no more than 3 to 5 questions and with “tick box” type answers. In order to get higher take-up of this feedback request you may enhance your offer with further discounts, a free product or report/e-book download as an incentive. You may set up a competition with a free prize draw. If you do use a competition ensure that you do complete the prize draw and send the prize out of the winner and get as much media attention as possible.
- **If you are an eBay seller** you will have lots of options within your eBay shop to market using online leaflets, newsletters and allowing your customers to keep you as one of their favourites within their eBay account. If you market to your eBay customer base using all of the various tools within eBay you will drive more opportunities through that channel. I go into a lot more detail on this in our eBay training course and members website, see www.h2so.org.
- **For Amazon sellers, you need to be** a little more imaginative on how you market to that audience, as Amazon will never give you the customer's personal email address and will not allow you to market directly to your customers in a way that may take them away from shopping through the Amazon platform.

Therefore, you need to include in your package that goes to the customer something that will really drive them back to your website in another way, big offers, free gifts, or you can target them by direct mail as you will have the name address and delivery details for each customer on your database.

Over the years direct mail has received quite a battering, however in today's market the specialist direct mail service providers are seeing more targeted and focused campaigns with companies returning to use specific direct mail opportunities with a large number of reporting increased conversion results and sales.

4: Deal with problems quickly, effectively and non-personally

- You cannot please every customer every time**, things will go wrong. Items will get lost in the post, deliveries will be late, breakage during transit, and the item was not as described, as far as the customer is concerned.
- THE most important thing is you must not take this personally.** It is a business, things will go wrong and the customer will be extremely fast in letting you know something has gone wrong. Every situation will be unique and to the end-user customer it will be extremely important. Therefore you need to look at how you resolve the problem in the quickest and most cost-effective way. If you do this in a friendly and understanding manner the chances are you're going to turn that angry customer into a fan who will do business with you again. This is because you have gone the extra mile, effectively dealt with the issue and brought it very quickly to a satisfactory resolution.
- When you have a problem that arises more than once** learn from it. Is it a problem you created through poor packaging, slow dispatch, confusing the customer with a non-intentional misleading description, failing to communicate effectively or was it a genuine mistake? Whatever it is, it's your customer's opinion of your business that counts. So stand back and look at the problem from the customer's perspective, learn from it and put procedures in place so that it doesn't happen again.

CASE STUDY: CYNTHIA SCHAMES' EBAY STORE SUCCESS STORY

"How Cynthia Schames eBay store went from \$0 to \$2M sales within 18 months"

Opposite is an extract from a very successful eBay seller. You might not feel 100% comfortable with the way she communicated with her customer base, however I've included it here so that you can take the idea and adapt some of the best bits to fit into something you feel comfortable doing for your customers.

Feel free to research Cynthia Schames on the web as there is indeed a story out there.

I) USING SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILES

*"Dear {{first_name}},
Thanks so much for your recent purchase at my store, {link}!
I hope you absolutely love your new (fill in the product that they most recently purchased)."*

I truly appreciate and love my customers, and regularly offer special discounts, giveaways and promotions as a way to say "thank you". If you're interested in receiving regular updates about these promotions, please follow me on twitter @username, or on Facebook at {link}.

I post different specials in each place, (Twitter-only specials, Facebook-only specials) so check out both Twitter and Facebook so you'll REALLY be in the know! Again, thank you for your continued support of {store link}. Feel free to contact me any time with questions, comments or requests! Have an awesome day, and I hope to see you again soon!"

THE KEY CONCEPTS BEHIND THIS EMAIL ARE:

- Thanking for the purchase one more time, and expressing sincere appreciation.
- Gaining followers on Twitter, Facebook, etc. in order to get another marketing channel.
- Offering exclusive discounts, deepening connection to the individual buyer.
- Keeping it brief, upbeat, and friendly!

II) USING REFERRAL CODES

*"Hello {{first_name}},
Thanks so much for your recent purchase at my store, {link}.
I hope you LOVE your new (fill in the name of the item, and personalise if they told you anything relevant, such as "it's for my son's birthday"). I'm writing today to let you know of an awesome promotion you can share with your friends--and you benefit too!"*

Between now and {DATE}, refer a friend to my store and give them this discount coupon code {1010 WINS} followed by your First Initial/Last Name. If they make a purchase, I'll give them 10% off, and you will receive a voucher for 10% off your next purchase too! Because after all, sharing is good!"

You can simply forward this email to your friends to let them in on this great deal, or you can tweet about it, or post on Facebook. Make sure to use the coupon code 1010WINS followed by your first initial & last name so I know who to thanks! Thanks again for your support, and I look forward to "seeing" you again soon!"

SOME TIPS ON GETTING REFERRALS:

- The purpose of the email is to get more potential customers to your store, email list, twitter feed, Facebook page, etc.
- The second purpose is to encourage repeat business. A repeat buyer is much more likely to share your store link with friends, so even if they only buy twice, they've often spread the word about you. Free marketing!
- Remember to be extremely clear about how customers can redeem the offer, when it expires, and mention if there are any products excluded from the offer.
- Make sure you are offering the customer a tangible benefit for sharing with their friends.

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III) FEEDBACK REQUESTS

Dear {{first_name}},
Thanks so much for your recent purchase at my store, {link}.
I truly appreciate each and every one of my customers, and hope that you are completely pleased with your purchase.

If you are, I'd love it if you would take a moment to leave feedback for me here {link}. Feedback is important to me as a seller so I know what I'm doing right and what I could improve, but it's also important to the rest of the community who rely on the words of their peers to help guide their purchasing decisions.

If for some reason you are less than perfectly thrilled, please don't hesitate to contact me! I will do my very best to work with you to make sure you're satisfied.

Thanks again for your support--it means the world to me.

Hope to see you again soon!

As sellers, we all know feedback is important, not only to help us continue to amaze and delight our customers, but to let us know when something's not right, and possibly most importantly, to help establish and maintain our credibility to new potential customers.

This is particularly important if you sell higher-value items, which I did. I learned early on that sending a simple, friendly reminder that feedback is appreciated often resulted in my receiving feedback on about 90% of transactions.

- **The purpose of this email** is both to provide a post-sale offer of support and to get that all-important feedback.
- **It's a great way to open a dialogue** with a customer, whether they're thrilled, annoyed, or anywhere in between.
- **I personally never considered a transaction completed** until I had received feedback, or at least exchanged emails with the buyer after the item was received. By sending out a reminder email 7-10 days after the item was delivered, I was able to bring my percentage of feedback received from the usual 50-60% up to 90%+!
- **On eBay, the buyer leaving feedback** figures into your coverage under the seller protection plan, so it really is in your best interest to encourage all buyers to leave it.
- **Not all feedback is going to be positive**, no matter how awesome you are. That's just a fact of doing business with other people. Accept it (or fight it), keep doing your best to please your customers, and don't sweat the occasional disgruntled buyer.

About Andrew Whitfield

Andrew has been doing this for many years and is here to help your online retail business. His own business sources worldwide, promotes online and ships worldwide hundreds of parcels a week.



How To Sell Online

How To Make A Profit 24/7
Using The "PROPEL™" Technique



Andrew Whitfield

HowToSellOnlineLtd.com

In this powerful and easy-to-read book, Andrew Whitfield shows you how to make money by selling online. Find out the reality of what it takes and how your business - small or large, home-based or on the high street - can be part of it.

"You may be getting started with eBay, fine-tuning your rich keywords on Amazon there's a wealth of information and it's available to download instantly."

Testimonial for 'How to Sell Online' training workshop run by Andrew Whitfield at Shropshire Chamber of Commerce

"Wow, what a great course - packed to the rafters with great information. Most of what you learn is immediately applicable and I know Andrew's ideas work as I'm selling noticeably more as a consequence. Andrew is hugely knowledgeable and delivers the course in a very easy to understand way. Andrew's courses - and I've been on 2 now - are some of the best investments I've made in my business."

Charlie S, Shrewsbury.

Find out more about our training workshops - visit h2s0.org