

Resellers: How to get your customers to buy more

Up selling and cross selling to your customers

Up-selling and cross-selling are not about the hard sell or getting someone to buy something they don't really need or want. When done properly the process should almost feel like a service in its own right. One of the best examples online of up-selling and cross-selling is Amazon. Put an item in your basket and you are presented with "Customers who bought this also bought..." with the majority of the suggestions being more expensive items. If you go back to the home page it will have changed to show you items based on your browsing history along with items they feel are associated with that item e.g. putting a men's skater brand watch in my basket had them showing me jewellery, trainers and accessories.

If they don't know about it, they can't buy it

It may sound obvious but the first step is to actually tell a client about the range of services you can do for them. So many websites keep information about their products features buried deep in the depths of their website never to see the light of day. To make sure, once a customer has signed up you should send a welcome email that lists all the services you perform.

Bundle services

Being able to buy everything from one place is always an attractive proposition to clients who don't want to have to shop around. If your core product is web hosting for small sites you can look to provide creative services to help them with their banners, logo, HTML emails etc (and vice versa). Always keep an eye out for opportunities that may arise from any offhand comments a client may make about needing work in a particular area.

Time to renew

If you run monthly, quarterly or annual contracts which require the client to renew at the time of prompting (and I hope you do prompt and don't leave it to the customer to remember to renew!) inform them about the benefits of upgrading to a higher spec package and what great value it is. Also remind them about the other services they can buy from you.

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Limited time offer

If a customer doesn't bite straight away or you want to run a promotional campaign, offer the bundled services at a discounted rate cheaper than if they were bought separately. To create a sense of urgency and prompt a quick response, run it as limited time only.

Give them a free taste

Getting your foot under the table is always the hardest part. To reduce the client's perceived risk offer them something for free such as a scaled down version of your service so you can demonstrate your value. A lot of the application developers for the iPhone and iPod touch offer a 'Lite' version of the application to get people hooked and wanting more (which they then have to pay for).

Ongoing services

Ongoing services such as annual site reviews, PPC account management or monthly SEO reporting are a great way to establish a steady revenue stream and maintain a relationship with your client. When any other work crops up you can make sure you are top of the list when they look for a supplier.

Getting your customers to renew

Whether you are a web designer who resells our web hosting as nice extra earner or you have a dedicated hosting brand/ business using our back end to help you, your long term aim should always be to have 100% of your customers renew. Strong products and good service will always remain king, but here are a few ideas to add an extra kick to your efforts...

Regular contact

Don't spam them or send a novel's worth of content, but make sure you establish regular contact with your customers in a way that they are open to. A newsletter with useful/ interesting content and a competition more often than not tends to go down well. After I bought a book from them, web design/ developer site www.sitepoint.com have managed to stay at the forefront of my mind through a series of informative and useful newsletters I always read. I have since been back to buy more books directly from them.

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Put a face to your service

There are literally hundreds of thousands of faceless websites out there offering services of every kind, some trust worthy and others not. Show the human side of your service to reduce the level of 'perceived risk' by using your name in communications (newsletters and customer service emails), add an 'about us' page with your picture(s) and if you run a blog use the author's picture next to the post. Seattle based SEO company SEOmoz does a great job of this <http://www.seomoz.org/>

Offer them something they can't get elsewhere

This approach kills three birds with one stone; it is an excellent branding tool (see below), it attracts new customers and can act as link bait. What it actually consists of depends on your site and what you can realistically provide, but examples include exclusive price offers, free articles, access to free research, free gifts, and partnership deals with other companies/ web sites...

Make their website a success

A customer whose site is a raging success is less likely to cancel their hosting account than one who has left it to rot for 8 months. Provide them with the resources they need to achieve this e.g. image bank, extensive "How to..." guides, tips & tricks...

Offer an incentive to renew

Don't always take renewal for granted, and if there are any doubts offer a financial incentive to do so, e.g. "1 month free if you renew now". About 9 months after last placing an order with lastminute.com I started to receive marketing emails offering me voucher codes and discounts if I bought something else with them, which got increasingly more and more generous as I failed to do so, naturally in the end I did.

Which all lead to...Become a brand!

The trick here is to be more than a faceless company and service provider and become a brand they associate with and have some form of connection. It is important to understand a brand is more than a logo, it is that emotional connection people have with your business through your products, service, tone of voice, pricing, imagery, past experiences etc. A strong brand benefits from more sales, reduced churn and strong word of mouth. Wikipedia's article on brands is a good place to start reading more: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brand>