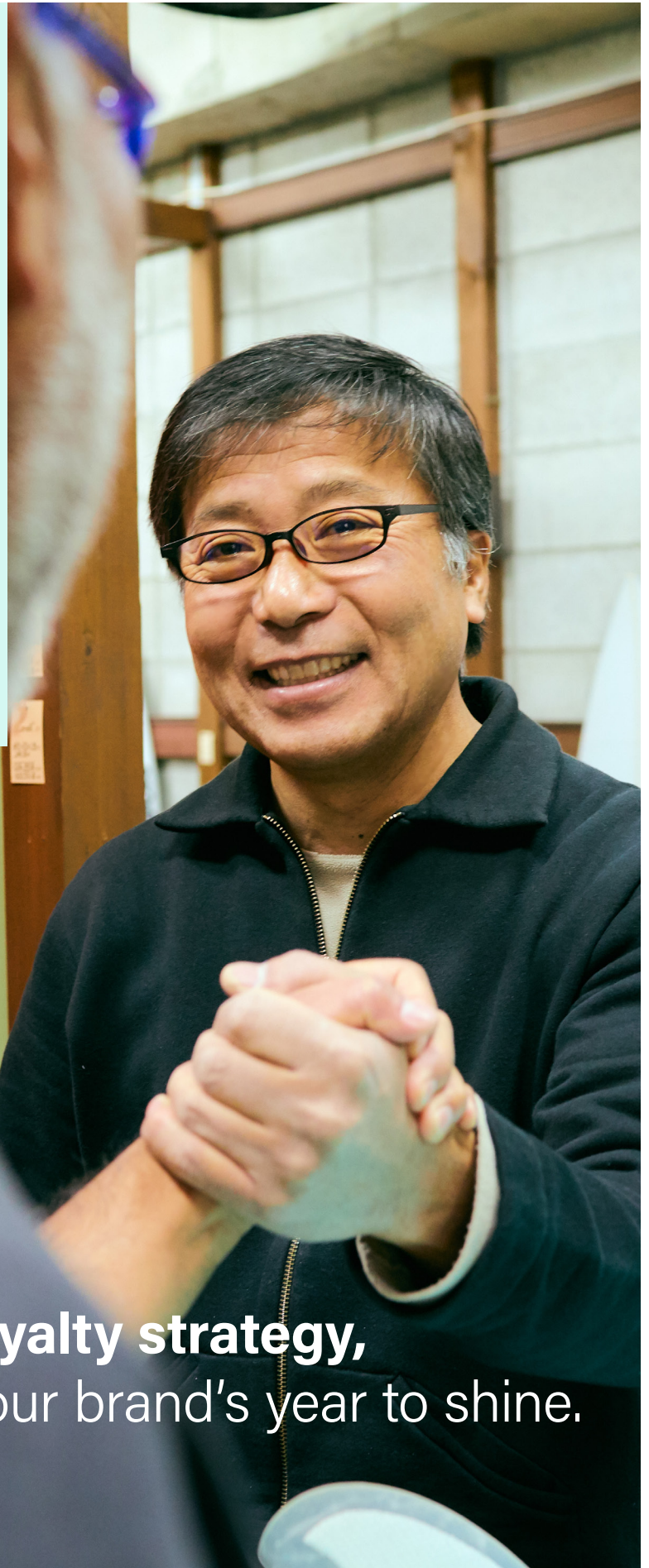# 2021 AND BEYOND LOYALTY STRATEGY

3 KEY ELEMENTS

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You rely on your loyal customers. So, how can you develop a loyalty strategy that sets your brand apart and actually creates more loyalty? The key is to build relationships and make returning customers feel special. With the right **loyalty strategy,** 2021 could be your brand's year to shine. Check out a few key elements to a successful customer loyalty program.

With the right **loyalty strategy,** 2021 could be your brand's year to shine.

1

— TREAT LOYAL CUSTOMERS LOYALLY —

What's one of the fastest ways to lose a loyal customer?

Make them feel like they're just one of the crowd — like your brand doesn't appreciate them or their continued business. We've all been there. You have an issue, so you call customer service. Instead of fixing your problem right away, you can't speak to anyone or you get bounced around to multiple departments. You end up sitting on hold for two hours, trying to get the issue resolved. Or, worse, you call the special loyalty hotline — the one just for loyal customers like you — and you get the same treatment with no resolution.

It's frustrating just reading about an ordeal like that, right? Now, imagine you're a loyal customer of a brand. You've spent your hard-earned money with that brand for years. You've referred friends and family. Imagine how much more frustrating this kind of situation is for a loyal customer than for a first-time buyer.

Your loyal customers have invested in you, and they expect you to invest in them. They expect to be treated at a different level than first-time or infrequent customers — because their loyalty is valuable. When the rubber meets the road, how are you treating them? Are you differentiating them and making them feel like they're really being rewarded for their loyalty? As a brand, you need to ensure that your loyal customers always feel special.

As a retailer, you need to ensure that you've properly identified and are reaching out to those loyal customers.

Don't just send them an occasional gift card or discount opportunity — ask for their opinions and listen to them. **You can improve your customer loyalty strategy significantly** by doing things like scheduling virtual one-on-one meetings to get customer feedback. This is a great way to connect with customers to hear their thoughts and let them know how much you value them. You'll get insights into what customers are looking for, and they'll spread the word that you really care about and listen to your customers.

2

OFFER UNIQUE PERKS

Anyone can create a points program that gives discounts for frequent purchases. While these programs aren't a bad idea, they're so common that they really don't set your loyalty program apart from your competition. As you develop your loyalty program, think about why your customers purchase products from you. Do they buy from you for convenience, or do they go out of their way to buy from you over a competitor?

Consider the nature of your business and your company culture. Based on who you are as a company, **what can you offer that your competitors can't?** How can you reward those loyal customers who make a deliberate, conscientious decision to buy from you?

So, as you plan your loyalty program, think about the unique perks you can offer. You might be able to deliver exclusive access to VIP events, access to pre-orders for items that go out of stock quickly, and/or free shipping and returns. You can also add a personal touch by reaching out via email or phone when a customer makes a return, to find out the reason for their return and what you can do to improve their experience.

The right perks and quality communication will make customers feel special. And, when you make customers feel special, they'll be more likely to stick with you and recommend your brand to others. That creates loyalty.

Let's take airlines as an example. They offer courtesy miles, but that's not all — they also offer priority boarding privileges and automatic upgrades to first class. Customers have the choice to fly for other airlines, but they won't get those perks!

3

— INTEGRATE LOYALTY IN ALL YOU DO —

Of course, developing customer loyalty isn't just a matter of rolling out a loyalty program and starting a loyalty department. It's a commitment that must touch every part of your business. Your entire company depends on repeat customers for success, and it's the entire company's job to deliver on your promise to those customers. To truly recognize and reward loyalty, your loyalty strategy needs to be data-intensive, and it cannot by siloed in a single department.

To implement an effective loyalty program that helps you retain delighted customers, you need to integrate customer data, purchase history, and loyalty program activity into your customer service platform. When a customer service representative answers the phone, they can then identify the person calling as a loyal customer — and give them the VIP treatment they expect.

Is your loyalty program integrated into your point-of-sale system?

Never underestimate the value of recognition. Make your customers feel special by giving your salespeople the tools to recognize them at check out. You'd be amazed how much a simple "thank you" and a little recognition can do for customer relationships.

Is your ecommerce site making recommendations and personalizing the customers experience based upon their purchase history? **Making connections and customizing loyal customers' shopping experiences is a fantastic way to bundle and cross-sell products for more sales.**

Just from these two examples, you can see how siloing loyalty data and only using it for your loyalty program can work against your business' best interests. Loyalty data is horizontal, not vertical, and it needs to be integrated into all of your systems to have the best impact.

Beyond systems, your people need to be trained on your loyalty program.
With the right training, they can add that unique human touch that builds quality, lasting relationships.
When you get full employee buy-in and give your people the tools to offer world-class, personalized service,
you'll see a loyalty program with real meaning and value for your customers.

Put all these pieces together and you get a loyalty program that makes your customers feel special and valued. Integrate loyalty with online sales and you increase average order values while decreasing abandoned carts. Integrate loyalty with customer service and you can give customers a sense of connection with your brand. As you reward them for their loyalty, they'll reward you with more sales, better reviews, and more referrals.

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Want to learn more about how you can integrate and automate a customer loyalty program and customer service platform that build real connections with your customers?

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