

# Getting more customers

*In the second of our marketing series, Sylvia Luckman shows how to locate more customers, segment them and identify new sources of revenue.*

Since marketing is “the matching of a company’s abilities with the wants of the customer”, you must be able to identify those wants – but even before that you must identify the customers themselves. Part of your marketing strategy will be to increase your customer base and to produce more profit, so it will be necessary to work out who are your potential customers as opposed to your present customers.

*What makes one customer different to another and what categories do they fall into?*

- Socio-economic – social class, status, income, etc.
- Psychological – personality, attitude, motives etc.
- Demographic – age, sex, marital status, etc.
- Geographic – region, urban or rural dweller, etc.

In the party industry the customer base is unusually large because it caters for people from birth to old age fitting in to all the above groups. This is good in one way but makes it a bit difficult when trying to decide where to target the push for more customers. The group with the most disposable income is the 18-30something and if you are situated in a bedsit or shared flat area then this is a prime target for fun and fantasy items and/or costumes.

Mums that are unable to sew and who become desperate with Book Week looming, not to mention the school play, will flock to you if they know that you have what they need. (I learned recently that a relatively small shop increased takings by over £1,000 in one week by targeting this group.)

Corporate clients are another group because they are always trying to make sales meetings more lively, company dinners more amusing, and speeches more memorable by using balloons, costumes, party items or decorations. It is sometimes hard to find the right person to talk to, but persistence pays off.

The local pubs, especially the free houses, are other good sources. I say this because for a time I neglected them. Happy to see the bar staff coming in for theme decorations and costumes, I failed to exploit the opportunity by going out to meet the owners or managers to create a personal rapport and gain more business. Eventually, the penny dropped and I did so – an increase in business resulted. There is nothing to equal a close rapport with customers, especially corporate ones because, as you know, everyone likes to do business with people they like and have confidence in.

In marketing, the study of customer behaviour is essentially the study of how people choose. But most important is what shapes these choices and how the result differs from person to person and product to product. The actual process of making a decision is in three simple stages. First, the customer becomes aware of a product or service you are offering by some sort of communication – advertising, word of mouth,

newspaper article, Internet – and decides to buy. Secondly, they use the product and decide whether it serves its purpose. Then thirdly, if everything has gone well, the customer will be back again. These are simply the mechanics of the operation and give no clue as to what influenced them to make the decision.

Customers are influenced by many factors in their buying behaviour:

- Economic: do they have enough money to buy it?
- Social class: would it be acceptable?
- Culture: has it been seen on TV?
- Peer pressure: all the other kids have it, why not me as well?
- Word of mouth: they think it’s good, so I want it!

Customers come to your shop because they perceive a benefit. Here are some possible reasons:

- 1 To attract praise – because almost everyone likes it.
- 2 To increase enjoyment – of life, of business, of virtually anything.
- 3 To possess things of beauty – they are good for the soul.
- 4 To avoid criticism – which nobody likes.
- 5 To look younger – all to the good.
- 6 To buy friendship – using their pocket money for friends.
- 7 To avoid effort – everyone is too busy.
- 8 To be entertained – because it is usually fun.
- 9 To be accepted – it means security.
- 10 To save time – time more valuable than money.
- 11 To attract opposite sex – never underestimate the power of love.
- 12 To fit in – be like their role model.
- 13 To protect a reputation – because they worked hard to create it.
- 14 To be trendy – they know everyone will notice.
- 15 To be excited – needed in a humdrum life.
- 16 To satisfy an impulse – basic reason for many purchases.
- 17 To be popular – inclusion better than exclusion every time.
- 18 To gratify curiosity – killed the cat but motivates a sale.
- 19 To be individual – some people are.
- 20 To escape stress – the nagging partner.
- 21 To give to others – also good for the soul.
- 22 To pursue a hobby – because all work and no play etc.
- 23 To amuse the kids – the Saturday Dads and the half-term Mums.

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