



Say Thank You!

"It's the polite thing to do." —Roger Craver

When I was running this magazine, readers would call or write me for advice. One of the most irritating questions was: "What is the optimum number of times in a year to contact my customers?"

My answer: "When you have something to say and something to offer. Otherwise, leave them alone."

Readers of my e-zine, *Business Common Sense* (businesscommonsense.com; subscriptions are free, so sign up!), saw a letter from a disgruntled reader who wrote:

Every time I use my American Express Centurion Card I cannot help but notice the following words printed on the front, "MEMBER SINCE '82." So, during the whole of last year, every time I used the card a lightning thought crossed my mind, "Gosh, that's 25 years!" But did American Express remember this auspicious occasion? Unfortunately, no. Despite having the relevant data, there was no e-mail, no thank-you card, no offer, no invitation to spend more, no phone call. Nothing. That really made me feel that American Express doesn't give a damn about my custom and 25 years of brand loyalty.

I have been an American Express Cardmember since 1964 and remember well expecting a note thanking me for being a 40-year customer. It never arrived. An e-mail remembrance would have cost nothing beyond one hour of a programmer's time. A thank-you card in the mail might have run a buck or so—peanuts when a 40-year member might rack up

\$3,000 to \$10,000 a month in charges ... or upward of \$100,000 a year.

Saying Thank You

What triggered this column was an e-mail from long-time friend Chris Warsaw, who forwarded me the thank you from 1-800-Flowers shown on this page. Warsaw wrote:

Just got this, prox. 2.5 weeks after my order. Nothing dramatic or new about the idea, but still smart! Sure makes me want to order again!

—Chris



Not only is it warm and fuzzy—as all thank-you notes should be—but it also followed a basic rule of direct marketing: Never send anything without making an offer.

In this case, 1-800-Flowers makes two offers—15 percent off on the next order and the opportunity to sign up for its Gift Reminder Program ("we will remind you of every upcoming special occasion in your life and provide appropriate gift suggestions").

Why is it imperative never to send anything without an offer? Two reasons:

1. If the person has no reason to respond, you will get no response and therefore have no idea whether the message was delivered.

2. With no offer, you have incurred a marketing cost without any hope of generating revenue.

In the case of this thank you, 1-800-Flowers is positioning itself to generate lots of additional revenue because busy

people hate to forget special occasions, and busy people also are lazy. Remind a busy person of Mom's birthday, make it easy to order flowers and chances are you'll get the order.

In short, with no offer, your message is wasted.

Think of the smorgasbord of offers American Express could have made in its thank you to mark my 40th anniversary as a Cardmember—travel, merchandise, discount coupons at great restaurants and stores around the world. I get goose bumps thinking about it.

Roger Craver—America's premier liberal fundraiser and founder of Craver, Mathews, Smith & Co.—got it right: "Say thank you. It's the polite thing to do."

It also happens to be the smart thing to do. ■

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