

FIVE WAYS TO



*surprise & delight*

YOUR CUSTOMERS

We live in an age when you can navigate an entire LinkedIn work history without ever meeting a person face to face, when you can investigate customer reviews on any restaurant, park, or technology solution with the click of a button, or when you can even receive live updates through just about any of your countless devices during your commute. Because because of this, the opportunity for serendipity comes few and far between.

A recent Harvard Business Review article argues that since our lives have never been more predictable, “surprise and delight” remain the most powerful marketing tools. Strategies that focus on fostering and investing in relationships make companies attractive to prospective customers, but also foster deep authentic relationships with current customers.

So how can you surprise and delight your customers? We'll give you five simple ways along with tips on how to get started now:

## Send thoughtful handwritten notes



A handwritten card goes a long way, because it takes time, energy, and deliberateness. How many times have you personally received a handwritten card from one of your solution providers that was really genuine—not just a quick scribble of thanks and a signature? Do you remember who sent you that card? While you may not remember exactly what it said, it probably went a long ways in building that relationship. Take the time to thank your customers for their business. Wish them happy birthday. Congratulate them on milestones in their careers or career changes to a new company. Do it with real, ink-on-paper, hand-written words. And maybe throw in some cookies or flowers while you're at it.

And what about “I’m sorry”? Your customer went through a painful implementation process getting your solution installed. Or they experienced a major hiccup during a critical time and took the heat. Or maybe something happened in their personal lives. A card expressing your sincere apology or thoughtfulness about a situation is perhaps even stronger than a thank you card, because it’s more difficult to find the right words.

**Start here:** Identify 5 of your best customers—those whom you have a strong personal relationship with and those who are active and gracious in working with your company, doing speaking engagements or providing referrals. This week, send them a handwritten card thanking them for their loyalty. Next—this is the hard part—identify 5 of your most difficult customers. Those that take every ounce of your energy, those that seem to reach out at the most inopportune times, or those that have had a major struggle with your product. Send them a note as well, and be sincere in your approach.

**Want to make it even easier?** (or “Handwritten Letter Hack?”) Use a letter sending service such as MailLift to send your letters for you. MailLift and others like it will write and send the letter or card for you. You just send them the text and they will do the rest. You will still personalize the message, but you can skip the steps of buying stamps and making a trip to the Post Office. With a service like this, you do lose a bit authenticity because you didn’t actually mail it and write it yourself. Be sure to make up for this by writing a significant message that refers to specifics. If you’re going to send a handwritten note that was actually written by someone else, go the extra mile by writing something meaningful.

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*Do it with real, ink-on-paper, handwritten words. And maybe throw in some cookies or flowers while you’re at it.*


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## Have even your execs get personal



There's a lot that B2B SaaS companies can learn from their B2C counterparts about the customer experience and winning customers for life. B2C companies, perhaps because of their ability to directly engage with the end consumer in a very public way, have the concept of surprising and delighting down to a science. Okay, maybe not all B2C companies as you're probably thinking to yourself, but many.

A recent Forbes article by Stan Phelps asks the question, "Does the senior team at your company talk about superior service and the importance of going the extra mile for customers? If so, how many actually walk the talk?" Stan goes on to give an example of a fast growing B2C company, Warby Parker, where a senior executive went several extra miles in order to truly deliver an exceptional experience to a customer. Get this: the executive had never even met the customer and there was no obvious reason she had to go above and beyond. She could have gone about her day without thinking twice about the opportunity to make a lasting impression on the customer. And no one would have been the wiser.




**Michael John Mathis**  
July 21 

I just experienced possibly the very best customer service of all time. A few weeks ago, I accidentally left my beloved Warby Parker reading glasses on the Acela. Annoyed, I bought myself another, identical, pair the following day. Today I received an unexpected package containing not one, but two pair of those same reading glasses, a copy of "On The Road" by Jack Kerouac and the following note: "Hi Michael, This might be odd... but you sat across from me on the train ride from NYC to Boston a few weeks ago and left your glasses on the train! As luck would have it, I happen to be the GC of Warby Parker, and there is nothing I like more than a good mystery... I hope these find you in good health! (also, we noticed your lenses were scratched so we made you a fresh pair!) Sincerely, AK

I am so impressed! What a remarkable person and company. They have a customer for life!

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B2B companies, while usually more private in their approach, can have the very same impact that B2C companies often have. No executive is too high up. No person is excluded, whatever their title. Everyone across the company should be on high alert for how they can personally affect a customer in a positive way.

**Start here:** Create the role of an executive sponsor for your top customer accounts and have that senior member participate actively in their assigned customer's dealings with your company. Have them visit onsite with the customer at least once a quarter and meet the team that uses your solution, have them sit in on the quarterly business review and important calls, and even have them shadow riskier moments such as implementations, customer support, or escalation calls.

Events and tradeshow are also a prime opportunity for your executives to get personal with customers in a face to face environment. Do you host private dinners or exclusive events? Have your senior executives attend, and also have them toast to the customers in attendance. Give executives seat assignments by your customers—not just prospects. Treating your customers with respect from the top of your organization on down will show them just how important and valued they are.

## Interact via social media



Social channels that offer a little more of a personal and fun angle to what users share can be a great way to interact with your customers. These channels, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, offer you a unique glimpse into their personal likes and dislikes, favorite restaurants, and family activities that professional media accounts like LinkedIn simply can't tell you. So often to B2B companies, a customer means a business. But there are real people with real preferences behind the business that are the true customer—the ones that chose your solution in the first place and the ones that use it everyday. And so, if one of these customers tweets that they've been meaning to read a certain book or love a particular restaurant in their area, find a reason to make it happen. Accompanied by a handwritten note (refer to #1) thanking them for their business, of course.



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*“Companies who use social media just to disseminate information to customers may not see high returns... Instead, companies who use social media platforms as a two-way communication medium tend to have a more successful social media approach.”*

MADHUR CHATURVEDI

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The reach and potential impact of social media is inexpensive and limitless. Take it from Oracle, who shared a recent blog post that talked about how social media should be a two-way communication model, and not just one where your company sends out information. Madhur Chaturvedi shared that: “Companies who use social media just to disseminate information to customers may not see high returns from social media usage. Instead, companies who use social media platforms as a two-way communication medium tend to have a more successful social media approach.” He went on to share some examples, including:

- Posting questions and surveys as well as general topics of interests
- Getting customers, prospects, employees, and candidates to share their queries and experiences related to the company and its products, as well as themes related to the company’s business. This can even extend to the sharing of photos and videos
- Set up dedicated customer service pages, tabs, or handles, as well as dedicated candidate query pages, with a promise of high responsiveness.

**Start here:** Assuming you don't have control of your company's social media accounts, you can take some of this into your own hands with your personal accounts. Twitter is a great place to start as it's less personal and doesn't feel intrusive. Who are those people in your customer accounts that you should follow on Twitter? Follow them yourself and also send the list to your marketing department for your social team to engage with on the company account. Follow their activity and begin to understand what they enjoy outside of work. Find something such as their favorite restaurant, candy bar, or golf course? Look for an appropriate opportunity to surprise them with something they'll love. They'll appreciate the gesture, and even more so they'll appreciate that it isn't just more work schwag.

## Invest in your customer's networks



There are few things that say you are invested in a customer relationship more than opening up your own network. Something as simple as offering to make connections to a certain customer will go a long ways, but by taking that further and sending them a list of individuals you think they will benefit from speaking to along with backgrounds—either from a professional perspective or a personal perspective—will completely surprise and delight them.

You probably have a few “master networkers” that come to mind when reading this. But we don’t mean you have to be one of those that can strike up a conversation with anyone at a cocktail party or be the guy that always “has a guy.” We mean the individual that is completely trusted and whose name carries a great association in the community because of their involvement, their friend circle, and their professional network. These individuals are rare because they don’t just care about getting a business card or making a sale—they truly care about providing value to their circles and want to invest in others and help them build up their relationships as much as possible.

**Start here:** Select a handful of trusted customers (that's a big key here) where you have strong relationships and you respect how they treat others and handle business. Go through your own LinkedIn account and your personal "friend" contacts and make a list of 5 individuals you think your customer would benefit from speaking to and send them the list. Create a little bio about each person and why you think the introduction would be valuable for both the customer and the contact. When you hear back from your customer, they'll be thrilled at the opportunity to meet new people and, chances are, they'll be more than happy to return the favor in the future.

# Sweat even *(and maybe especially)* the small stuff



While an unexpected discount on a recent invoice is certainly welcome and valued, showing appreciation does not have to involve a freebie. A very powerful way to show customers that you're invested in their success is to prove it by sweating the small stuff—the stuff that's really important to the customer, but may seem like an ant hill compared to your other problems. What do we mean by this?

Dave Blake, ClientSuccess Founder and CEO, shared a story from his previous days in Customer Success leadership: “I remember one CSM leader who truly exemplified this type of passion. He was at home in bed with a serious case of food poisoning. That same day, one of his top clients was experiencing serious issues with the service, negatively impacting one of their most important events of the year. The client called support and others trying to get the issue resolved, to no avail. In desperation, he called the CSMs cell phone for help. The CSM was tremendously sick, weak and exhausted and could have let the call go to voicemail, but when the call came to him, he answered the phone. Within 30 minutes, the

CSM helped navigate a resolution for his client. The client was on his way to having the problem resolved, and the CSM was back to his sick bed. That's an example of a CSM who has a true passion for customer success."

Having passion and a desire to make your customers be successful is an incredibly important trait. It's easy to get bogged down with a daily to-do list and working on the biggest problems, but often what customers want most is for you to care about even the seemingly smallest details.

Start here: Next time a customer comes to you with a concern, no matter how small it is, do everything you can to fix it or call on someone who can. Do you have a backlog of customer wishes or needs that you just haven't had time to fulfill? Express your desire to work on these "small wins" to your manager and ask for assistance in taking care of some of these details or by requesting for a few hours that week to work remote to focus on your customer needs. It'll go a long way in showing that you care—because you're willing to roll up your sleeves.

## **Conclusion**

We've included just 5 ways to get started surprising and delighting your customers, but we hope this quick guide will help you think through other ways where you can make a true impact for your customer accounts.

Share with us! What are some ways that you have surprised and delighted your clients? What have you learned along the way?

# How are you surprising and delighting your customers?

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