

11 WAYS To Land *LOYAL* & *LONG-LASTING* Customers



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Introduction

My customers are jumping ship! How do I keep them aboard? In this whitepaper, we'll show you how you can keep those valuable customers and gain new ones as well. We have 12 tips for you to try that should help enormously with retaining customers. And when you're ready to get serious about customer retention, you can't miss learning about Janitorial Manager's client portal and messaging app.

Tips for Customer Retention

We all know how expensive gaining new customers can be. You have to employ new strategies, plan different marketing campaigns, and even hire additional help. [According to Bain & Company](#), engaging new customers is 6 to 7 times more expensive than retaining current ones. This is why you should work diligently to keep your existing customers happy. But what causes happy customers to become leaving customers? [Donald Porter](#), the Vice President of British Airways, says that poor customer service is to blame: "Customers don't expect you to be perfect. They do expect you to fix things when they go wrong." Along with good customer service, there are many other tactics you can use to keep your customers happy, and best of all, loyal:

1. Ensure Customers Feel Heard

While you may think that speedy customer service is the best way to care for your customers, the truth is that many front-line employees focus too much on the speed of customer service, rather than the service. This is an issue as customer service ratings drop when customers feel rushed. Your employees' efficiency levels might look good on paper if they're faster in their interactions with customers, but are customers actually satisfied with the level of service they've received?

The answer is, usually, no. According to [William J. McEwen](#), author of the article, *When Speed Kills*, customers relationships only endure "when companies pay attention to meeting the important

emotional needs of their customers. And these needs aren't met by faster service but by better service."

McEwen's claim is supported by research. The Gallup Group found that customer service labeled as "courteous, willing, [and] helpful" rather than "speedy," produced customers nine times more engaged with a brand.

Part of ensuring that customers feel adequately serviced is by spending quality time with them answering their questions and concerns. The other part is by reaching out to customers. As explained by Gallup Group, "Lasting ('loyal') relationships result from the culmination of regular contacts between customers and companies." You can create lasting relationships by regularly asking customers to complete surveys or give feedback about your service. Take their suggestions to heart and implement the changes in your business. As a result, you'll have more loyal customers.

2. Pay Close Attention to Details

They say that "the devil is in the details," and when it comes to providing cleaning services to your clients, this could not be more accurate. When your customers walk into their facility, they expect to find it in a better condition than they left it in. Your plate is full and keeping up with every little detail can be difficult. Utilizing mobile inspection software to perform frequently scheduled spot inspections to verify quality can help you:

- Efficiently report and identify areas of deficiency
- Provide and track custodial productivity trends
- Share key metrics and services with your customers
- Provide Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that can be used to hold staff accountable

3. Make Sure Your Employees are Happy

We've all had a bad job at some point in our lives, right? Doing a job that drained your motivation and in which it was nearly impossible to get through the day. The cause may have been the work environment, the tools, poor training, or lack of recognition by your management. Whatever the reasons, you were disengaged, and, at some point through some serious examination, you realized that you needed to leave. A place with unhappy employees usually does not have happy customers.

The problem with disengagement specifically is that it affects almost every aspect of a business. [The Gallup State of the American Workplace Report](#) done in 2017 showed that a measly 33% of employees are engaged at work. That's a horrifying statistic! That means that over 70% of workers in our country aren't engaged with their jobs. That should be a huge wake-up call to every business owner in the US. After all, happy employees lead to happy (and loyal) customers!

According to Jason Whitman, VP of Customer and Employee Success at [Justworks](#), the best way to get happy customers is actually to ensure employee happiness first. Here's how to make sure that your employees are happy:

Happy Employees Build Relationships

If an employee believes their status at your business is temporary, they'll keep to themselves and won't engage with anyone or anything at the office or on the work site. That includes not engaging with your customers. Whitman explains, "nobody wants a stagnant-looking role." One way to estimate the level of satisfaction your employees are experiencing is to see how they relate to those around them. Are they joking around with their coworkers and putting up personal mementos at their desk? Or are they keeping to themselves, doing only what is required and not communicating with you or anyone else?

It's pretty easy to see whether or not your staff is happy. If you're unsure about their level of happiness, just ask! It's up to you as their leader to open the lines of communication. You can also talk to your top customers to see if they think your staff is happy. If they've had any personal interaction with your people, they'll know.

Happy Employees Feel Supported

Whether it's advancement opportunities, having consistent training as part of your business culture, having their back when issues arise, or giving them rewards and recognition, your employees need to feel supported when they come to work or arrive to a job site. They need to be able to do their job with confidence. This involves employees being able to confidently handle the technical aspects of their job and any relational challenges that may arise.

Again, think about how an employee who doesn't feel supported will handle a customer problem: They'll place the blame somewhere else, they'll talk disrespectfully to the client, they'll shy away from any kind of confrontation, or they'll burn a bridge completely. But if an employee feels like you're going to support them, he or she will have all of the necessary know-how for the situation. And since employees have been trained on how to handle issues, they won't have any problem walking a customer through the issue from beginning to end, even if they feel uncomfortable.

Happy Employees Look to the Future

Let's face it, your company won't last very long if your staff isn't happy. If your employees are confident in their positions, it will show in their day-to-day work. Another place it will also show is in their commitment to the success of your company in the long-term. If employees can really see how they fit into your business model and what their participation can do to help the business succeed, you'll have loyal employees and long-lasting customer relationships.

4. Handle Customer Disputes Well

If it hasn't already happened, the day will come when you see, nestled within so much positive feedback, the dreaded "one-star" review on Yelp for your cleaning service. If you're a commercial cleaning company, you might lose business as a result of a customer telling his or her friends about you. A customer might accuse you of being overpriced or neglectful. They might even say that you have no idea how to manage a cleaning business. Or, maybe you get an e-mail directly from a client, denouncing your services and swearing they'll never work with you again, all over a small misunderstanding.

Never fear. Your cleaning business isn't tarnished forever. In fact, if you know how to manage a cleaning business customer dispute the right way, you might even get that unhappy customer to give you a second chance.

Keep calm and question on

No matter how much it stings or how tempted you may be to jump to your defenses, don't. The worst thing you can do when a customer complains either through e-mail or a public forum is to begin by saying you didn't do anything wrong (even if you didn't). Doing so will only put your unhappy patron further on the defensive.

Instead, tackle the issue one step at a time. Apologize and ask questions. What is the nature of their complaint? Does it have to do with a task that wasn't completed, or is it something more serious, like a report of theft or vandalism? Demonstrate patience and sympathy as you investigate the complaint. Perhaps, most importantly, actively listen before you respond. Active listening means you're paying attention to the other person instead of formulating your answer while he or she is talking. Take time to show customers that you are genuinely concerned about their dissatisfaction.

Be timely

If you receive an e-mail complaint, don't wait a week to respond to it. The same suggestion applies to negative reviews you receive on online forums. That said, don't jump to answer either. You might say things that come across as defensive or accusatory. Instead, as soon as you become aware of the complaint, take your time and formulate a respectful, concerned response. Once you've done that, send it or post it right away so that the customer knows you've heard them and you want to try to make things right.

Timely responses not only tell customers that you care about them, but also that you care about your business. If someone complains on a Monday and you don't get around to responding until Friday, it suggests that you have something better to do, which isn't going to help much with an unhappy client.

Be prepared to take action

If the dispute is something as simple as a cleaning job not being done thoroughly or for the right price, rectify the situation by giving out a free cleaning or a discount. Sure, you might have to eat a few bucks over it, but it's worth the slight hit if it means you've saved a customer (or at least stopped him or her from tarnishing your business's name online). If the dispute is more serious, let's say an accusation against one of your employees, take it to heart. Question the employees involved and dig as deeply as you can. Respectfully inform the customer that you will get to the bottom of it and keep them apprised on your process and discovery.

In any case, don't send the same employee back to that location. Neither the employee nor the customer will be comfortable if you do. On the other hand, if you do find reason to suspect an employee, don't shy away from disciplinary action. You probably trust your employees or else you

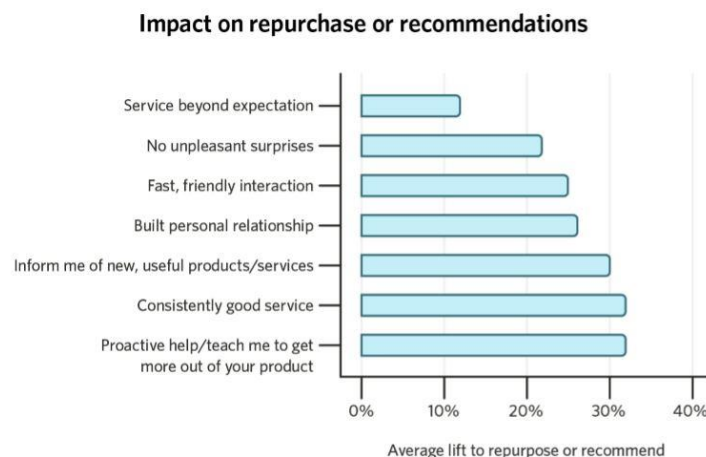
wouldn't have hired them. However, sometimes people make poor choices. Make sure you're ready to take a stand for your customers just as you would for your employees.

Don't let it drag you down

Whichever way you choose to resolve the issue, take the steps you deem appropriate and then move on. Complaints and criticisms can be hurtful, especially since you've put so much heart and effort into running a successful business. However, don't be surprised by criticism because no cleaning business is perfect. In the words of the poet, John Lydgate, "You can please some of the people all of the time, you can please all of the people some of the time, but you can't please all of the people all of the time." You and your employees will make mistakes, sometimes at the expense of a client. Learn from it what you can and then focus on bringing even better service to your next client.

5. Provide Consistently Good Service

There's something to be said for service that's consistently good. Eli Overbey, Head of Growth at [Help Scout](#) suggested that companies, "Focus on consistently meeting expectations and avoiding unexpected surprises. Then go the extra mile." Companies can spread their budget thin by making showy plays to gain customer loyalty. There's something to be said about keeping things simple. Check out this chart:



Source: TARP Worldwide

According to this chart provided by [TARP Worldwide](#), service beyond expectation increases how many customers will reuse or recommend the company by a little over 10%. That's good, but look at how much of an increase there is when a company provides consistently good service. With consistently good service, the number of customers who will reuse or recommend a company increases to a little over 30%! Based on the numbers, you should attempt to provide both consistently good service and service beyond expectation. You can also use data in Janitorial Manager to regularly review your business with a client. However, as we mentioned before, you'll find it easier to *first* focus on consistently provide good service and *then* focus on going above and beyond.

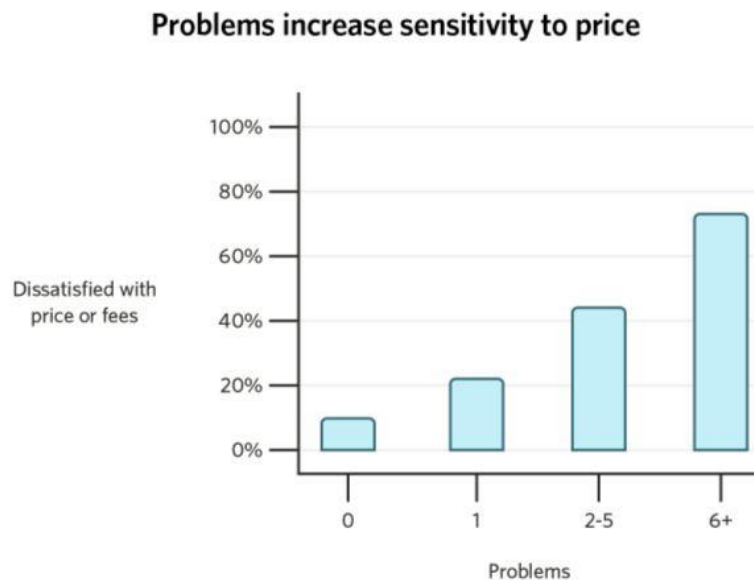
6. Inform Customers of New and Useful Products/Services

You can retain customers by regularly informing them of new and useful products or services that you offer. For example, you start using [geo-tracking](#) to ensure that your employees are at a location when they need to be. You can let your customers know about your new technology by giving them a quick phone call or sending out emails. When you inform your customers about geo-tracking, you'll gain their loyalty because you've shown them that you're always looking out for their best interest. In this case, you guarantee that your employees are on a job site when they're scheduled to be.

7. Offer Proactive Help/Service

Proactive help or service is also known as anticipatory help or service. Your company anticipates that a customer might have questions and reaches out to the customer first to find out. This could be as simple as calling the customer and asking if they have any questions. You might think that your questioning is intrusive, but Megan Totka, editor-in-chief of ChamberofCommerce.com said, "being proactive and establishing dialogue will show awareness from your company and prove that you have respect for your customers' time." After all, no one likes to spend time on hold trying to reach customer service because of an issue with the company's service.

Another important reason to provide proactive service is to prevent customers from leaving your company for another. A study by John Goodman showed that “customers were more sensitive to price changes, and thus more likely to churn, when they experienced a few problems with the product or the support they received.” Take a look at the [chart](#) below:



Source: [Strategic Customer Service](#)

The more problems a customer experienced with a product or service, the more dissatisfied they became with the price or fees. If you want to keep your clients satisfied, make sure that you reach out to them first about any issues or questions they might have. This way you can prevent them from becoming too dissatisfied and jumping ship before you’ve had a chance to keep them on board.

8. Give a Personalized Experience

Love it or hate it, you’ve probably eaten an Olive Garden at least once in your life. In addition to the never-ending salad, breadsticks, and soup refills, the waiter or waitress also gives a couple Andes mints with the bill. Have you ever had a waiter or waitress come back and give you extra mints after you’ve paid? The act probably made you feel extra special. After all, you already paid the bill. The waiter or waitress won’t be getting any more of a tip. So, what do they get out of it?

A lot, in fact. By giving you extra mints, that waiter or waitress was providing you with a seemingly-more personalized experience. They're banking on you remembering how good you felt when they brought you extra mints you weren't expecting. And when you next decide where you want to go to eat, they're hoping you'll come back to their Olive Garden and tip them even more the next time.

You can incorporate this same tactic at your business to give your customers a more personalized experience. We call this tactic, Operation Olive Garden Mints. You don't have to hand out mints, however. Simply keeping in regular contact with your clients will give them that personalized experience that keeps them coming back to your business.

9. Respond to Advocates of Your Business

It's the 21st century and the internet is a strong platform for customers to voice their opinion of a business or service. When someone [rates your business](#) on Yelp or Google, respond with a thank you! This tells customers that you appreciated their feedback and also increases the likelihood of their repeat business. If you're reading your online reviews, you should also keep an eye out for any references to your company on social media. Customers that advocate your business to their friends should also get a thank you.

10. Offer a Referral Program

Referral programs work if you've got a really great offer for the referrer. Offer customers a gift card for coffee or credit added to their account when they refer people who become customers. With this method, you get to keep your old customers loyal while gaining new ones.

11. Perform Small, Thoughtful, and Unexpected Gestures

If a few extra mints can create a more personalized experience for a customer, so can regular, thoughtful gestures. As little as 10 cents can create reciprocity between two people, according to

psychologist Norbert Schwarz cited [here](#). However, you don't have to spend that much money to engender feelings of reciprocity. When you sign up a new customer, record his or her birthday so that you can send a birthday greeting. Include a special freebie for the birthday boy or girl, if you want. You can also send your clients a small card every year on the anniversary of them being with your company or on holidays.

How to Use JM to Increase Customer Retention

To take your customer retention strategies a step forward, you should use a janitorial software like Janitorial Manager. With a janitorial software, you can track performance and provide increased efficiency and cost control. A janitorial software allows you to oversee and manage your clients, the quality of your work, open work order, employees, and inventory (at least our high-powered janitorial manager software does, we can't speak for anybody else's). The added benefit of a janitorial software is that you can use it to increase customer retention because you'll improve your efficiency, customer service, and communication.

Customer retention = efficiency + customer service + communication

Client Portal

In this day and age, the idea of staying connected is pretty passé – everyone has a smartphone, a tablet or a computer, and there are so many social media outlets and types of communication available that staying in touch should be easy. But if you do any kind of research on client satisfaction, the biggest area where improvement is needed is communication. Good communication can cut through the flood of information that bombards clients in a world of constant connectivity.

You can find a lot of advice out there about leadership, client relations, or how to use different forms of communication, but if you own a commercial cleaning company, some of that is just filler. You

need a practical way to reach out and stay connected to your clients that doesn't waste your time or theirs. If you're already using the best cleaning management software (ours), then what you need is a practical piece that's already built in – the Client Portal.

What is a Client Portal?

In case you're not familiar with the concept of a client portal, let's first define exactly what we're talking about. You may not have realized it, but if you have ever done online banking or online shopping, then you have utilized a client portal. A client portal is essentially an electronic gateway allowing companies to securely share information and data with clients using internet access with a Cloud-based application. In some cases, like with a specific type of software, companies can control the amount of access so that the client is restricted to only those parts of the software that are relevant to him or her. The client portal in Janitorial Manager is a tool for managing and tracking communication between the client (your customer) and the service provider (you).

Why do I need it?

The great advantage of having a client portal is that it gives clients the freedom to interact with you when and how they need to, all with the touch of a button. Usually, face-to-face contact is the best way to provide personalized service. However, with changing customer expectations and the fast-paced, technology-driven world that we live in now, many businesses, large and small, are looking for new ways to interact with customers. Client portals are an excellent example of this type of innovation.

Think about your cleaning business: would it save you time and money to have clients contact you rather than you contacting them every time a job needs to be done? Of course! With this type of scheduling software, clients receive a unique access page where they can log in and put in requests or leave comments.

When the client submits a new request, there is a system notification for the user (you, and anyone you give the same permission to) within the software, and you also receive an email alert about the request. You can respond with notes directly to the client, determine whether or not a request has been completed, and even request a client to sign off on a job. You and your staff are able to attend to it promptly by confirming the request receipt in real-time, assigning it to a cleaner immediately, and providing step-by-step updates until the need is met. This all helps you to stay better organized and helps keep your schedule more current.

By communicating via the client portal, you eliminate the risk of missing a message from a customer and creating an uncomfortable situation. Instead of trying to keep track of messages via email, face-to-face, phone, SMS, and social media messaging, you simplify the process down to one means of communication: the client portal. Additionally, all messaging is instantly documented, searchable, timestamped, and archived for future reference.

As the owner of your business, you know which client needs more access in the portal and which ones do not. You easily can manage all portal activity and decide what information clients can see when they log in. You can determine who at your business can access data for each individual client, which will not only help you keep everything straight, but it will keep the lines of communication open as you see fit.

How Can I Use the Client Portal?

If you're one of the bidders present during a "cattle call" for a potential contract, you need to feel fully confident that you can present a strong case for your company. A client portal is one attractive feature for prospects to hang their hat on during this process because it:

- Proves you have the tools necessary to provide prompt service
- Showcases a willingness to maintain consistent communication with your customers

- Signifies reliability and accessibility to your services
- Demonstrates a professional image via the use of modern technology
- Provides a compelling reason to set your services above the competition
- Increases the value of what you bring to the table

Plus, a client portal is just one of the many features that are included in a quality commercial cleaning software suite. When partnered with a strong training program and a quality assurance process, your proposal becomes comprehensive and legitimately competitive when positioned next to even national cleaning brands! The customer portal can also help you retain customers because it assists you in many of the retention tactics mentioned in the previous section. With a customer portal, you can ensure that customers feel heard, handle customer disputes professionally and promptly, and give a personalized user experience.

Messaging App

True or false: Your cleaning company employees are attached at the fingertips to their smartphone. Easy to answer, right? Here's one that might be even easier to answer. True or false: YOU are attached at the fingertips to your smartphone. Did you answer "true" to both? Then Janitorial Manager's messaging app would definitely help your cleaning company communicate more successfully.

These days, phone calls are now thought to take up too much time during the day. Even skimming an email might be an inconvenience. Instead, mobile messaging has become the preferred method of communication. Thankfully, Janitorial Manager's messaging app can help you reach out to customers:

- Almost 9 out of 10 consumers globally (89%) desire to use messaging to communicate with companies they do business with

- Only 5 out of 10 businesses (48%) are adequately equipped to provide messaging to their customers
- Millennials prefer messaging over email when engaging with a business
- Messaging is 3 to 8 times more preferred over face-to-face communication across all generations
- 85% of consumers would choose to reply to a message from a business if given the opportunity
- 2 out of 3 consumers worldwide use mobile messages to exchange information with each other and with businesses

In addition to being the preferred method of contact, messaging is useful because it's trackable.

With Janitorial Manager's messaging app, everything that is sent or received is threaded together in an archivable conversation. This feature helps ensure proper context, accountability, and timestamped messages. Having this content available for later reference and all in one place is incredibly useful.

Next, your customers and staff can check their mobile messages from their phones, tablets, and even their watches! Messages are expected to be short, sweet, and to the point without being fancy, formal, or superfluous. Messages are also different from a phone call or a video chat because the other party doesn't have to be available at the exact time you send a message. You can send a message knowing that when the recipient is available they'll be able to get the update. It's convenient and an immediate channel of communication.

A mobile messaging app is familiar, simple, and fast, and it can be used for so much more than typical SMS texting. Not only does the app keep all communications readily available in one place for you to review, monitor, and respond to, but it also lets you keep your staff and customers engaged with what's happening in your cleaning company, including:

- Appointment confirmations/reminders

- ETA updates
- Last minute scheduling changes
- Work orders and tag work assignments
- Urgent notifications
- Delivery statuses
- Service delays
- Order confirmations
- Customer service (“How can we help?”)
- Providing verification codes or login information

You can also use messaging to let your customers know about new products and services (#6 on our list of customer retention strategies) and answer any questions (#7).

Ronald Haulman is one of many business owners who has discovered the value of utilizing Janitorial Manager’s messaging app:

If you had asked me to text customers 15 years ago, I would have told you that 13-year-old girls text message, and there was no place for it in a professional setting. But now, I would be entirely wrong. Customers want to know things and they don’t always want a phone call if they can get their answer in a text. Even our older customers are more okay with us sending them a text. They really like it.

His customers are clearly pleased with his messaging approach, and so are his employees: “My staff is reporting higher levels of efficiency by using Messenger because they are not getting on the phone and having long phone calls... we are able to give the customers what they want, when they want and do it very quickly.”

Conclusion

With these strategies in hand, you should easily be able to retain more of your valuable customers by ensuring that they feel heard, valued, and taken care of. We have the same customer service goals at our company. We're available any time if you need us for a quick question or tutorial. And when you're ready to get serious about customer retention, you can contact us to learn more about [Janitorial Manager software](#). Schedule a one-on-one demo with one of our helpful employees, and you'll quickly be on your way to building profitable, long-lasting, and loyal relationships with your customers.