

John Niland

Valuing your customers



About ten years ago, UK banks got a lot of bad press by offering sweet deals to new customers, while subjecting their current clients to a systematic policy of "rape and pillage".

Customers pushed back and went elsewhere. The banks attracted a lot of negative comments, both via press and social media, to the extent that at least one major bank ran a prominent advertising campaign claiming that their customers were not subjected to these tactics.

However, many other organisations have yet to learn that lesson. During January, I was hit with a 15% price increase for my storage facilities in Belgium. Annoyed at the organisations unwillingness to offer any alternative, I simply went elsewhere. Yet the very same organisation is offering "first month for one euro" deals to new customers, at the very same depot where I have vacated my goods!

Leaving Shurgard aside, what's the point of incurring an increasing cost of sale to get new clients, while at the same time making existing customers resentful at shoddy service or arbitrary price increases? Before we all join in a chorus of agreement, does any of this sound familiar?

- Preparing carefully for a "new client" meeting, while routinely turning up to current client meetings with minimal prep?
- Putting time and effort into communication with prospects, but

never doing a special story for current clients?

- Investing in pre-sales activities (e.g. producing marketplace insights) for prospective clients, but sticking rigidly to the brief with existing customers?
- Involving the best people in bids and tenders, while delegating delivery to less experienced personnel?
- Producing case-studies, websites and newsletters for prospects, but nothing tailored to the needs of the people with whom we are interacting right now, this month?

Given that your current clients will probably account for three-quarters of your next year's revenue, don't they deserve some special attention?

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About the Author

John Niland is best-known as a conference speaker on doing higher value work and creating more opportunity via better conversations. His passion is energising people: boosting growth through higher energy levels, that in turn leads to better dialogue and business growth. Since 2000, John has been coaching others to achieve success, with a particular passion for supporting professionals "who wish to contribute rather than just to win, and hence do higher value work via better conversations with clients and colleagues".

In parallel, John is one of the co-founders of the European Forum of Independent Professionals, following twelve years of coaching >550 professionals to create more value in

their work. Author of *The Courage to Ask* (together with Kate Daly), *Hidden Value* and *100 Tips to Find Time*.

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Publication issued on 1 March 2015