



## How To Lose Loyalty

Here's a common scenario: A public darling of an organization is suddenly reeling ever since the revelation of problems with one of their products. They go from media darling to media target. How will they fare? What does this situation show us about loyalty - and how to earn it/keep it?

Earning loyalty in business is the same as earning it in our personal relationships. Both start with getting your attention, then getting to know each other. Finding similarities in values, preferences, and interests. Occasionally, one makes a mistake - but if there's been sufficient deposits in the "emotional bank account", AND open/honest regret AND sufficient behavior change, the relationship can be repaired. For this to happen there MUST be value for BOTH sides. Common ground. It needs to be worth the effort.

Yes, companies screw up. But when they've built up a lot of deep relationships with many, many years of consistent safety, excellence and service, there's hope. If they make the proper recovery, their reputation and future opportunities will be as impressive (or nearly so) as it was before.

The lessons are:

1. Always be wooing your significant other (in this case, your customers are the significant ones)
2. If you really care, you'll do what's in their best interest
3. If you screw up, and you really care, you'll make an obvious effort to fix the problem AND fix the relationship...based on what the offended party deems appropriate

Loyalty is rarely earned by "faking it" in front of the customer. We all know when we're being conned. If the relationship is fake, then these kinds of mistakes will ultimately be fatal - and any loyalty gained will be lost. If the relationship legitimately has value, it's not by accident. It's because you've taken action on the things that matter to the customer.

What are YOU doing to earn loyalty? What are you doing to KEEP it?