

Required Reading: Love Thy Customer

by [Colin Beasty](#)

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In today's market the first commandment is "Love Thy Customer." Corporate trainers and speakers Rick Brinkman and Rick Kirschner bring their style and innovative approach to winning over even the most challenging customers in their new book *Love Thy Customer*. *CRM* magazine's Colin Beasty spoke with Rick Kirschner about what customer love means.

CRM magazine: In the book you show how there are different ways to communicate to customers to let them know you're taking them into consideration. What are some of those ways?

Kirschner: We came up with the idea that there are different roles a company should play when you want to create delighted customers. You want to be a healing presence in their life if they're upset. If they have an issue you want to make sure you communicate that you understand what the problem is from their point of view. Another one is getting into a problem-solving mode. Finally, represent yourself as an advocate for customers' needs, because if customers keep having the same problem over time, it's because somebody failed to look at the bigger picture. So those are all different approaches to communication. We talk about honoring your customer. I think to truly serve your customer you have to realize perception is all there is. You could think you're winning and be losing, or think you're losing and be winning. To add perception to your customer relationships you must ask for feedback from customers and listen. This gives you great insight.

CRM magazine: In general, happy employees can mean happy customers. What are some ways to keep employees focused on customer service?

Kirschner: Besides getting feedback, if your employees are delighted you're going to get delighted customers, if your employees are angry you're going to get angry customers. You're not going to get something from relationships with people on the outside that you're not producing with your relationships on the inside. One thing you can do is to make sure your employees know how well the customer understands the product you sold them. For example, let's say I own a computer and call the computer company up. One of the smartest things the computer company employee can do is find out how much I know about my computer--am I an

advanced user, beginner, whatever? Another way is to keep good records of previous relationships. That way you can refer back to the past when dealing with the present. It tells customers that this is a relationship and not a transaction, and I think that counts for a lot.

CRM magazine: What do you think readers will find most interesting about your book?

Kirschner: One of the big points in the book is that love doesn't require money. It's sort of an impulse of businesses that they need to spend lots of money to get great results with customers. The fact is that it is the little things that count the most. If an employee takes the time to hear customers out, it means a lot more than somebody offering them the latest and greatest deal. One quick example of that is I needed to buy something and I had five different vendors for it. I ended up going with the one who built the relationship with me over the phone. The company made me feel like it was looking out for me. Those little things, when push comes to shove, are what made me purchase from them as opposed to one of the other companies that offered me something for free. Love doesn't require spending money.