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New year, big plans: How to leverage customer loyalty in your 2012 strategy

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By Jill Manser

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Ah ... a fresh new year. So much promise. So much pressure.

As you look to turn shrunken marketing budgets into productive campaigns, we offer a proven strategy to getting the best return for your dollar: Think loyalty.

Turn up the dial on your current loyalty program

So, you don't have to be convinced that a loyalty program can benefit your overall communication strategy. You've already bought into that, launched a program, flipped it on autopilot and moved on to other initiatives.

Problem is, you haven't been minding the store when it comes to growing this golden customer base. These are your fans; they love you. You need to return the love.

It's far cheaper to keep a customer than to acquire a new one. Take a hard look at what it takes to move your program to the next level. Reconnect with your best customers, find out what's most relevant to them and dedicate a chunk of your ad dollars to boosting your value proposition with the people who matter.

Adjust for the New Norm

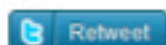
It's likely the marketplace looks a lot different today than it did when you first launched your loyalty program. The US economy is growing about 2% per year – well below historical averages. Influential analysts say it's time to adjust our perspective for a "new normal." Begin 2012 by revamping your reward structures, incorporating new reward elements and strengthening your conversations with customers through social media.

Start fresh with a new program

In a saturated marketplace where little differentiates you from your competition, a loyalty program can throw a consumer's purchase decision into your court. The share of wallet is greatly reduced in the last few years. A loyalty program gives your customers a reason to consolidate their purchases with you, instead of price shopping.

Once upon a time, a loyalty program felt like a bonus to your overall marketing strategy. Today, it must be leveraged prominently to make your marketing dollars stretch the farthest for your 2012 plan.

Jill Manser is VP of Creative & Strategy Integration at [Customer Insight Group, Inc.](#), a strategic marketing company that helps companies improve the return on their marketing investment by developing and executing high-performing acquisition, loyalty, upgrade and retention programs. She brings over 20 years of experience in developing creative that delivers results.



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