

07/26/16 - Wawa Teaches Us 3 Steps to Capitalize on Customer Loyalty



When I think of customer loyalty, there is one store that instantly comes to mind ? Wawa. For those readers who are unfamiliar with Wawa, let me say that the following description will not do it justice.

Wawa is a chain of convenience stores and gas stations originating outside Philadelphia and now found throughout the Tri-State Area, Maryland, and Virginia. However, to many of its customers, it's **more than that. It's a point of local pride and culture.**

Now, if you look at a map of Wawa locations, you may notice one outlier ? Florida.

As of November 2015, **Wawa had 79 locations in North and Central Florida.** So ? why Florida? Today, we'll look at three ways that Wawa is leveraging customer loyalty to expand it's footprint.

Step 1: Go the Extra Mile

According to the Sun Times, Wawa executives have announced plans to mount another 120 stores in Southern Florida by 2022. President Chris Gheysens has stated that it has always been Wawa's plan to spread to most of the Sunshine State.

But didn't they skip over a few states ? the Carolinas and Georgia ? on their way down the East Coast? What make Fort Myers and Orlando so special?

The answer is simple ? **Wawa has migrated with its customers.**

Step 2: Recognize Your Loyal Customers

Retirement in Florida is a popular trend for people from the Tri-State area ? where Wawa's **strongest, most loyal customer base** is located. Wawa recognizes customer loyalty ? and they know the importance of it.

People from around here don't just like Wawa for its convenience and quality ? they *love* it, to the degree that some have even called it a "cult-like" customer base. And if you have a foundation of loyal customers who are *devoted* to your brand, product, or service ? they will *miss it* when they no longer have access to it. So, it only makes sense to make it available to them.

Deputy Mayor Barbara Smith of West Melbourne, Florida told Florida Today that she spent years petitioning the board of her town to open a Wawa.

"Most of the people on the board don't know what [Wawa] is," she said, at the grand opening of the her town's Wawa. "But [my family is] from Philadelphia. So to the planning director, I said, ?Listen, as soon as you hear the word Wawa, please understand: **it's not just a store, it's a way of life.**"

At the opening of a Wawa in Lehigh Acres, near Fort Myers, a local marching band played the national anthem to a crowd of more than 150 people. Loyal East Coast customers have tattoos of the Wawa logo ? and some have even gotten married in the store.



Step 3: Don't Discount the Value of Loyalty

The Wawa brand is important, sure ? but what's more important is the **extreme level of customer loyalty** that Wawa has been able to cultivate with that brand. The quality and experience of Wawa food is important, but it's not what keeps people coming back ? there are other places to get a good, quick meal ? but those places *aren't Wawa*.

If you have customers that trust and are loyal to your brand, **it's worth a little extra work every now and again** to keep them around. Don't neglect the business that you've already won ? if you have to skip over the Carolinas and Georgia, *go ahead*. Because loyal customers are **tried and tested revenue**, and if you follow them *they will continue to be*.

Step 4: Apply These Lessons to Your Business

To help you put these lessons from Wawa into action ? try answering these questions. Take 3-5 minutes and see what you come up with ? or, get your team together and put your team's knowledge of your customers to the test.

- *How can we go the extra mile?*
 - Who are our MOST loyal customers?
 - What is the VALUE of their loyalty?
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