

One of the biggest challenges we have is that every day, there's something new, and so every day, my clients are wanting to chase the next thing, to not miss out, and more often than not, that just takes away from caring for your existing customers, building those relationships, marketing to the people you already have, and better allocating your marketing dollars for a greater ROI.

Welcome to *Marketing in the Know*, the premier podcast to help you leap ahead of the marketing curve so you can grow your business. Now get ready, set, and grow with your host and tour guy through the marketing jungle, Buckley Barlow.

Mr. Barlow: Hello, hello, insiders. It is Buckley here, and welcome to *Marketing in the Know*. I am pumped up to have my next guest on today. He's a guy at the top of his game. He's a thought leader when it comes to strategic marketing and customer loyalty. He's a coach and a consultant to all sorts of small business owners, executives, and individuals, and what I like about him is he never takes his eye off the prize, and that is growing your top and bottom line. On top of that, he's a No. 1 bestselling author on Amazon where he wrote the book, *Evergreen*, a book about how to cultivate enduring customer loyalty that keeps businesses thriving. That's good stuff.

So Noah Fleming, thanks for coming on today, my friend.

Mr. Fleming: Thanks for having me. Glad to be here.

Mr. Barlow: So Noah, getting to No. 1 on Amazon, wow. In a very competitive field, that's quite an accomplishment, so congrats.

Mr. Fleming: Well, thank you. I appreciate it.

Mr. Barlow: Was that part luck or part awesome content or part you have a major, deep network?

Mr. Fleming: Well, I think it's a little bit of all of the above. No. 1, it can be No. 1 for a day or for a few days or for a couple weeks, and so I sort of sat in there during the launch phase for a couple weeks in that sort of No. 1 spot to No. 10 spot, and now it just sort of fluctuates. I think now we're about nine months into the book being published and it's still listed in the sales marketing customer service sections as, I think, the No. 1 top-rated book in those sections.

Mr. Barlow: That's awesome.

Mr. Fleming: I mean, that's kinda, you know.

Mr. Barlow: That's awesome. I may have to pick your brain on another episode.

Mr. Fleming: I'm happy to do it.

Mr. Barlow: Okay, hey, so Noah, I'm excited to dive in and talk shop about customer loyalty. That is a huge topic for a lot of companies out there, so I'm excited to get your take on the best practices that you've learned from mentoring and working with hundreds of businesses. You're a young gun, and you're crushing it. I love it. So are you ready to do this?

Mr. Fleming: Let's do it, let's do it.

Mr. Barlow: Well, before we dive in to some of the more specific things around customer loyalty, why don't you give us the skinny on you, your company, and what you do over there? So take it away.

Mr. Fleming: Sure. Well, it'll all come together nicely. So I am a consultant, and I work with clients really anywhere with revenues ranging from \$5 million up to \$150, \$200 million in revenue, so that's really your small privately held company. Now I also do a ton of work with entrepreneurs and sole professionals that are looking to grow their personal brands, to become better entrepreneurs, that are doing offline things, online things, any sort of mix of the above. So I do a lot of that work, but really, the core of my business is consulting with privately held companies on sales and marketing and how they can improve in those areas, and so much of that is really dependent on the concept of customer loyalty.

Mr. Barlow: Yeah. How long you been doing this?

Mr. Fleming: I have been doing this now since about 2004, 2005. So I came out of school, came out of university, went into the corporate world – and that's a huge other story in itself – into my first –

Mr. Barlow: Yeah. Hey, by the way, isn't it always?

Mr. Fleming: It always is, but I was in my first job for about a year and really around the first day of that first sort of corporate world job, I got into my office without a window and I thought to myself, what am I doing, this doesn't feel right, this doesn't feel like where I need to be. So about a year after that, I left and I went out on my own. I started working with small mom and pop shops locally, your local

business, helping them with their sales, helping them with their marketing, and then that has grown into this point where I'm working with much larger organizations, but the issues – you would think they'd become more sophisticated, more challenging, but really they don't.

They're dealing with the same issues regardless really of the size of company, of the industry, whatever it is they're selling. At the end of the day, it really comes down to the same things.

Mr. Barlow: Yeah, it's interesting. When you got started – you got started, you got a few years underneath your belt and then, bam, the great recession happens. How did you handle that, especially with customer loyalty? Customers were fleeing at that time, so I would imagine that was quite an insight during that period?

Mr. Fleming: Well, and that was the wake-up call for me for the entire concept of *Evergreen* because what I found was that that wasn't entirely true because all throughout the recession and the times when the economy was supposed to be bad and doing poorly, there were still businesses that were thriving, that were just crushing it the entire time, and so I wanted to figure out what is the commonality here because my business didn't go through that downturn. My clients didn't go through that down time, and I wanted to know was there something different here, something interesting I could find that I was doing differently, that my clients were doing differently, and it turns out there was.

I cover a number of those things in the book. I call them the three C's of evergreen companies, but was really looking at this concept of a company being like an evergreen tree. They're lush, they're lively, they're green all year round, where everybody else was like a deciduous tree where they were susceptible to the environment. So when winter came, they lost all their customers, like dead leaves, and so even though there was those slow times, I think that with the right marketing the right focus on customer loyalty, the right focus on the retention, you can avoid all those downturns, all those down times, whether it's the economy, whether it's anything else.

Loyalty is a function of day in and day out marketing and building those relationships with your customers, and the best companies, the best clients of mine, they're getting that and they're thriving because of it.

Mr. Barlow: That's cool. Great job on the title of your book, *Evergreen*, by the way, and that's a great analogy. I love that, and it's a great segway into the entire discussion that we're gonna have, and I can't wait to learn more about how you're implementing your ideas and what you learned because that is really, really cool. Now, loyalty is such a big issue, like I said, for so many companies, and I'm the kind of guy who likes to know what's working, how it's working, how well it's working. I would imagine you're that same way, right? So when we hear ideas that take hold and then we learn how they take shape and get implemented and we see the results from those efforts, it paints this incredible blueprint on how we could build the idea into our business.

So take us through what you see as the best customer loyalty and retention practices being done out there today, and then I'd love to know how you're implementing these ideas and what kinds of results you have seen.

Mr. Fleming: Sure. So the biggest problem with customer loyalty, in my opinion, is the term itself. The concept of customer loyalty is really a misunderstood term, and there's a lot of myths. There's a lot of beliefs about customer loyalty that are just blatantly false. So one of those myths, for example, is that we can buy loyalty, and this started in the '80s with the rewards miles from the airlines, and that worked for a while, and it still works. Those are highly successful companies, but what they don't have is that true emotional, engaged connection with their customers.

So even though I might collect miles with Delta, there are times when I'm going to fly with another airline because the only thing that I'm really loyal to is ensuring I have a good seat at a good price that gets me there on time. So that's one of the big myths. Another myth, for example, is that loyalty should be owed. So if we do everything we've promised in our sales and marketing, if we provide a great customer experience, if we provide followup customer service, then the customers owe it to us to be loyal, and I've heard people actually say this, you know, the very definition of customer loyalty is that it's up to the customer to be loyal, and the reality is, is that's not true.

The reality is that it's up to us as business owners, as business executives, to earn the loyalty, and by earning the loyalty – I mentioned this just a few minutes ago – it's really a function of day in and day out marketing. So you asked me how we're doing this, how my clients are doing this. Well, the really cool thing

about *Evergreen* and the really cool thing about customer loyalty is that I'm talking about everything that happens after the sale, after you close the sale, after you get the business, all those processes that come into play to keep the customer.

The really cool thing I'm finding with my clients and the really cool things that we're doing is that customer loyalty is really determined by everything that happens before the sale, and so that's sort of an interesting thing to start thinking about. We start thinking about these things long before we've ever got them, so, for example, attracting the right customers, attracting the right leads, right. You can attract leads all day long, but if they're the wrong leads or if you close the business and you don't have the right follow-through, then you've just wasted all that time, you've wasted all that energy and you've wasted all that money, and so that's one of the other myths of loyalty is that new customers and new growth can save our company, save our business.

We all need new customers to grow, right, and if I sat here, Buckley, and said you don't need anymore new customers as of today, people would say I'm a lunatic because, of course, we need customers and we need new growth. But what happens is, too many companies are solely focused on the acquisition, the getting of customers because it's sexy, it's fun, it's glitzy, it's glamorous, it's all the great stuff we get to do, right. Before we started recording here, you and I had a long discussion about marketing and how fun it is right now, right. Too many companies get so obsessed with the fun that they forget about what happens after the sale.

So let me give you a tangible example of that. I'm working with a client who's working with a company to set up some retargeting and some – all this really cool, sexy stuff about retargeting and remarketing, and there was a very sharp sales guy that got my client sold on this, got them all excited, all pumped up, and the deal was closed and the deal was signed and the insertion order was signed and they had the credit card, and then came the time to actually implement the tracking codes and all that stuff.

Now normally – and I'm talking sort of on web, techie stuff, but normally when we're implementing conversion code or a tracking code, it's a simple line of code. It's a simple implementation that anybody should be able to do. The implementation involved here was heavy, deep development stuff, stuff that's going to require a developer to build and literally spend thousands of dollars to

implement. So the sales guy closed the sale, but he's attracting the wrong people. He's setting the wrong expectations.

He's promising things that aren't being delivered, so I have to ask myself, how many customers is that company losing even though the sales guy has officially done his job and closed the sale because they've lost this one now. There's got to be others that are getting the same sort of expectations set that aren't being met. So it's just an interesting thing to think about.

Mr. Barlow: Yeah, it's interesting. There's two takeaways that I'm hearing from you. One, there's a shift in a mindset with your clients, right. You've gotta get them to think differently than how they've been classically trained. That's hard to do, even if you tell them several times in a short amount of time or even over weeks; it's hard to actually stick. How do you get a mindset shift in a culture to actually stick?

Mr. Fleming: It's one of the hardest things because, again, retention, optimization of the customer after the sale is something that's very hard for people to measure. It's something very hard for them to tangibly understand. So in larger companies, when you have executives who answer to their boss and have to come with quarterly reports, it's very hard to show those improvements sometimes. What's a lot easier is to show the latest promotion they've ran and to show how many new leads that generated or Facebook likes to Twitter followers or even conversions, and that's very easy.

It's harder to show the other, but when we get them to understand that there's far greater profits to be earned, less money to be spent, more time invested on the other end, and we can actually show them that and they start to understand that retention is truly a profit center and a way to grow a company, that's where you really start to change that mindset.

Mr. Barlow: Well, that leads me to my second takeaway, is planning. You are obviously a strategic marketer, and so planning is a big, big deal for you, and so getting the mindset shift and getting the mindset in the right frame of mind and then being able to plan out the strategy so you're not tactically chasing channels everywhere, I think that's a huge cue for any business.

Mr. Fleming: Tactically chasing anything and everything, right. I mean, one of the biggest challenges we have is when I talk about marketing being the sexy side of this is that every day there's something new, and so every day my clients are wanting to chase the next thing, to not miss out, to believe that they have to be pinning or poking or tweeting or jabbing or whatever it is, the latest buzz word, to think that they need to be there, to think that they need to jump on that bandwagon.

More often than not, that just takes away from caring for your existing customers, building those relationships, more strategically marketing to the people you already have, and better allocating your marketing dollars for a greater ROI instead of chasing that next elusive thing because you don't want to miss out.

Mr. Barlow: Yeah, yeah. Now, let's assume I hire Noah Fleming and I'm doing 5 million in sales, I go through the mindset shift, I start enacting all the strategies, the plans come into place, we start to implement. What have you seen out there in terms of how well – what kind of ROI am I getting from implementing this classic mindset shift?

Mr. Fleming: Well, most of my clients see anywhere from a 10 to 100 percent ROI, 10 times ROI's the minimum of what I aim for with my clients, so whatever they pay me, we're looking at 10 times that. Far often, most cases, it's usually 100 times that. Being a retention guy, I want my clients to want to continue to work with me, and so I have clients that come on to do a single project one time. Seven years later, I'm still doing work for them. They're still a client. We're still engaged, whether it's a retainer or whether it's project basis.

So there's a small restaurant, one of my first clients. I told you I was working with the mom and pop shops. There's a small restaurant in the town where I live, and I live in a small town of 20,000 people with a restaurant that's earning revenues that would be exciting and profitable and interesting in a town of probably five million people. So how did they do it? Well, one, I like to say they do it because they're smart and they've hired me, but two, it's because they've really had that mindset shift to understand that the person that opens their wallet, the person that opens their soul, so to speak, and do business with them, is everything. So we're going to do whatever it takes to retain that person.

I'm mentioning this because seven years later, these people still write me a check every month just to have me there, just to have

me able to answer questions for them, to provide my advice and my expertise on a retainer basis.

Mr. Barlow: That's great. I love the part in your book where you talk about the leaky bucket in this power of mindset, and you brought up this word – you're really a retention specialist, right, and there's a new buzz word out there being bandied about called the retentioneer, and this is a retention specialist that also uses all sorts of ways to figure out how to create the stickiness of the brand. I've got a question for you. So how does this modern day retentioneer, someone that's focused on re-creating that original ah-ha moment over and over again using data, how do you see this data-driven modeling affect the leaky bucket syndrome?

Mr. Fleming: So it's a great question. The first issue I see is everybody is obsessed with data right now. Everybody wants more of it, right. Every day, we hear about big data and all the things that data is going to be able to do for us. With my clients, I say that's great, okay. Let's collect data. Let's get to know our customers. Let's understand what's going on, but at the end of the day, I have this simple golden rule about data, and my golden rule about data is that if you can't explain what you want to learn to a 12-year-old, then you probably don't need that information.

Mr. Barlow: That's great.

Mr. Fleming: And so I always help my clients simplify it down here and say, okay, this is great. We have data on the customers that are returning with us. We have data on customer lifetime value, we have data on this, we have data on that. Now, what is it we want to learn and then how can we take action focused and accountable to that, and so, again, if we can't explain it to a 12-year-old what we're trying to learn from all this data, then we don't need it, and so that's how I approach it.

Mr. Barlow: Yeah, you and I are cut from the same cloth. Anything that stands in the way from taking our focus away from the ultimate prize, which is creating more revenue, I don't wanna have anything to do with it, right. Yes, I want the data. Yes, I wanna create new tactics and I wanna try new channels, but I always wanna be focused on the top line and the bottom line. I don't wanna just search after vanity metrics. So, speaking of vanity metrics, let's talk social media, shall we? That's a hot topic right now in terms of data and analytics. Twitter, Facebook, they're coming out with more and more analytics. The data in social is hot right now.

I see a lot of companies moving their customer support over onto these social channels to gain that customer loyalty edge, right. Do you believe these channels have – do you think they have staying power, considering what you just mentioned?

Mr. Fleming:

Well, so a lot of people have come to me after reading *Evergreen* and said it's really a breath of fresh air when it comes to social media because, as I talked about earlier, everybody's running around like chickens with their heads cut off, jumping on the next big thing, and what I tell you in *Evergreen* is only be where you need to be. So the crab fishermen that we see on Discovery Channel, for example, probably don't need to have Twitter profiles. They probably don't need Facebook pages, but yet, there's other social media gurus out there telling them, everybody's on social, this is where your customers are.

I say if the social tools are a way for you to engage and build that relationship with your existing base, then that's fine, use it that way, but using social media as a tool to just act like a fire sprinkler where you're monitoring TweetDeck or HootSuite for mentions of your brand and then the moment somebody mentions your brand, you're either trying to (a) attract them to become a client through some clever tweet directed at them or you're responding to some negative feedback that they've posted about you, then you're really using the tools ineffectively. You're acting like this fire sprinkler.

You're reactive, as opposed to being proactive, as opposed to getting out there and talking to your customers, as opposed to finding out what social networks they're actually using. Where are they congregating? How can you bring them closer together with those tools? But this whole idea that we need more eyeballs, I think, is just ludicrous, this idea that we need more eyeballs, more people, just in hopes that we might capture one of them or we might get one new customer out of it, right. I've never found a client from social media.

Mr. Barlow:

[Inaudible] [00:20:00] little bit. What is Noah Fleming doing? What's working out there for you in terms of attracting an audience for you, increasing your brand visibility? What's working out there for you and what's not working? What have you tried that just didn't resonate? So yeah, let's start with either/or.

Mr. Fleming:

Well, let's assume that some of your listeners are consultants or budding consultants, and let's make the assumption that they're

like me and they're trying to grow their practices. The three key things that I think work for us in this profession are professional speaking, writing, and peer-to-peer referrals. Those are the three key things. So if you're a consultant, if you have expertise that you want to share, then you need to be speaking at conferences, you need to be speaking at events, you need to be speaking to associations. You need to be speaking to groups where your ideal buyers are. You need to be writing and publishing prolifically and, if you can, you should be commercially publishing.

I have this book out, I'm working on my second book now, trying to get it sold. The book is really a tool. It's a tool for a number of things. It's a tool for me to share some information that I believe is truly evergreenly valuable to people in my ideal market, but it also becomes a credibility tool. Then the third thing, as I mentioned, is peer-to-peer referrals. So you need to be meeting your ideal buyers. You need to be networking with them. You need to be getting to know them, and you need to be on their radar. So those are three things that work tremendously for me. The things that don't work, again, are some of the things I've mentioned, social media, paid advertising.

These are not things that work, in my experience, for people in my profession, especially the ones that are charging relatively high fees but based on tremendously high value. So that's where my focus is right now.

Mr. Barlow: That's cool. That's cool. Now, I always ask my guests a couple questions that I just love to hear the thoughts and the feedback on these, but if you were to hire one person on your or your client's growth or marketing team, what would you be looking for today and why?

Mr. Fleming: Oh, that's an interesting question, and mine again would probably be far more strategic, based on the three things I just mentioned. So I would be hiring someone to do some of the nitty-gritty work that takes me time and takes me energy, so to seek out where my ideal buyers are, to find the publications that they're reading and see if I might be able to write for them, to find different events that they're going to be at and to see how I might speak at those events, to find different networking events where my ideal buyers would be.

Now that I'm saying this, I'm feeling like I probably should actually hire this person, but that would be the person I would hire,

to hire somebody to do some of these day in and day out tasks that I do consider marketing efforts and help me do those a little bit more efficiently.

Mr. Barlow: That's great. Now, what is the best piece of marketing or growth advice that you've ever received in your life?

Mr. Fleming: Well, I mean, I'm asked a variant of this question often, and I always, always give the credit to my father, who told me this one simple line growing up. He worked in a factory as long as I can remember. He would come home, and he would come home and then he'd head in and do the midnight shift or when I would be just waking up to go to school, he'd just be getting home and going to bed. So he always said to me, write your own paycheck, and over the years, he explained to me what that meant, and he would say things like, Noah, you know, my paycheck, the amount of money I make is determined by somebody else every other week, but you have an opportunity to decide what that paycheck's going to look like, how much you're going to write it for.

He always urged me to follow that path. Even though he stressed the importance of school and education, and I certainly followed through on that, he always urged me to get out there and to learn how to make a dollar for yourself, and if you can do that, if you can market and you can learn how to help others and to provide value, then you'll never be broke, you'll never be poor, you'll never experience those economic downturns that we talked about earlier.

Mr. Barlow: Yeah, that's awesome, Noah. Now, insiders, if you'd like to know more about Noah and how he can help you with your customer loyalty issues, which could impact both your top and bottom line, you gotta head on over to noahfleming.com, and a great way to find out more about Noah as well as to pick up where we're leaving off on this conversation, you ought to go get a copy of his book, *Evergreen*. It's a great book with tons of valuable insight, and again, you can find that at noahfleming.com, and that's with one M. So Noah, hey, thanks so much for coming on today. You rocked it. I think you wanted to say something and offer something to the insiders, right.

Mr. Fleming: Well, I do, and I know sometimes people skim through these, and I know this is going to be something I just mentioned, but I'd like to give away three signed copies of *Evergreen*, but here's the scoop. You have to email me. Email me at noah@noahfleming.com and

tell me, what was the quote that my father always said to me. Again, I just mentioned it, you might've missed it. You might've picked it up, but the first three people to email me at noah@noahfleming.com, then I will know that they're in the know, and I will be happy to send out a signed copy of *Evergreen* to those three people.

Mr. Barlow: Hey, that is cool, Noah. We really, really appreciate it. Thanks again for coming on today.

Mr. Fleming: All right, I appreciate it. Thank you, Buckley.

Mr. Barlow: All right, insiders. That's a wrap. Hey, thank you for joining me on *Marketing in the Know*. Hey, I'm going to ask you to take a minute of your time to just review, subscribe, and then give me some feedback. This obviously is new to me. I'm gonna take the good, bad, and ugly, as I've said many times before, but I love to learn and improve, and I mean that. So if there's someone out there, by the way, that you'd like to hear from, just drop me a line. Head on over to beintheknow.co and drop me a line and let me know who you'd like to hear from. Thanks again, and I'll catch you next Tuesday.

We appreciate you joining us for this episode of *Marketing in the Know*. For show notes and a free version of *Ready, Set, Grow*, visit beintheknow.co. Thanks again, and we'll see you next Tuesday here on *Marketing in the Know*.

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