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Insisting employees address customers in a formal and respectful tone is one way for a business to improve its image.

How to improve your company image

Many people are familiar with the conventional wisdom about first impressions. When you only have one chance to make a first impression, it's a good idea to make the most of that opportunity. But not every first impression inspires fond memories, and while erasing a bad first impression might be impossible, that does not mean a second impression can't trump its predecessor.

That's especially true for businesses. Businesses typically experience a few stumbles out of the gate, and sometimes those stumbles coincide with a customer's first encounter with a business. When such encounters hurt a business' image, a business owner can employ various strategies to restore that image and increase the likelihood that future interactions with customers go as smoothly as possible.

Look the part. A T-shirt and flip-flops may be your ideal outfit, but such attire is rarely appropriate in a professional atmosphere. First-time customers who see employees decked out in less formal attire may feel the company also takes a lax attitude toward its work, so avoid fashion that might give the wrong impression.

Prioritize positive customer service. Many businesses suffer from bad word of mouth that's spread when past customers share horror stories of negative experiences with company employees. Such a problem is easily remedied by prioritizing customer service. This includes emphasizing that those who answer the phones always address customers respectfully and, when responding to emails or engaging in online chats, write professional responses that steer clear of informal language. Customers often understand that a product may malfunction, but poor customer service is inexplicable and will reduce the likelihood that a customer will become a repeat customer.

Commission a better website. Today's consumers often rely on the Internet to connect with a business. Consumers may want to peruse a restaurant's menu before booking a reservation or view a retailer's online catalogue before walking into the store. A good website can be a tremendous asset to a business, while a bad website can drive customers away before they spend so much as a dollar. A good website is informative and easy to navigate. Restaurant owners should include some photos of their establishment on the site to show customers the type of ambiance they can expect when dining. The site's URL should include only the name of the restaurant, which makes it

easy for potential customers to find the site when using a search engine. If the name you prefer is already taken by a similarly named establishment in another region, then include your state or city in the URL, such as JoesPizzaNY.com. If you are not skilled at building websites, hire a professional firm to build the site for you. Such an investment will likely pay for itself sooner rather than later and will increase the chances that customers' first impressions are good ones.

Establish a social media presence. Another way to rehabilitate or improve a business' image is to establish a social media presence that connects the business with existing and potential customers. Use the various social media platforms in different ways. A Facebook page can explain the history of the company, while Twitter can be used to alert followers to special promotions or events. Social media can also be used to solicit customer feedback, which can be used to ensure you are meeting your customers' needs and adapting to meet those needs when necessary. A business that listens to and actively engages its customers is more likely to have a positive image than one that does not, and social media can be the tool businesses use to connect with those customers. A poor first impression can be difficult to overcome, but companies can take several steps to regain consumer trust.

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