



The first step in building a [customer loyalty program](#) that works is working out what pain points your business is trying to solve. Depending on current market conditions, your organisation could be trying to boost sales, influence a shift in buying decisions from your customers, promote new products, or increase your share of wallet – these are all perfectly valid reasons to consider a B2B loyalty program. However, while these are your objectives, a key metric might be that a loyalty program should place a business and customer at the centre of your design and understanding the actual reason that a business would be engaging into a program like this.

Customer loyalty programs, first and foremost, are designed to make customers connect with your business. They incentivise future purchases and increased share of wallet, which therefore both boosts future sales and provides a competitive advantage over similar businesses in your industry. It changes the buying behaviour by keeping your brand front of mind for existing and new customers by providing additional value and aspirational gifts by simply doing what they were already going to do.

With current economic factors throughout Australia and New Zealand putting pressure on businesses, having the dominant position in your industry's share of wallet is more essential than ever. While it may seem like we're heading towards a downturn, this can also be a time to reassert your brand or product as necessary to existing customers and to capture new customers who may be re-evaluating their needs at a time when cost efficiency is important to prioritise.

Now that we've established the importance of the customer in the loyalty program design, it's also important to consider how the loyalty program could be important to the customer – as if

the program doesn't resonate with your desired audience, how are they supposed to engage with it, and more importantly, with your brand?

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a theory of human needs, usually visualised as a pyramid with the most important need as foundation, moving up to self-important needs as the below is met. For example, our baseline need is shelter and wellbeing – food, water, clothing, sleep. Without this, no other decision can be made – we, as human beings, must ensure this is met. Once this is met, we can then move onto safety and security, and so on.

These needs are also important in the way we design our B2B loyalty programs. We utilise and consider each step when laying out our potential programs, and we'd like to share with you how considering the importance of providing your channel partner's needs can lead to business success.

### **Safety in Numbers from your Customer Loyalty Program**

The next step to consider is safety as physiological needs will already be met in a B2B scope. While the above descriptors apply to individuals (and B2C programs), this may require some level of tweaking when it comes to B2B. The important factors here we consider are security and resources.

With B2B purchases, the buyer's journey generally takes a lot longer, due to the input required from high-level decision-makers. The journey will require an initial awareness of the pain point the business is facing, research on the pain point and how to solve it, as well as comparison against similar products and brands to ensure the one they settle on is right for them.

With all these required steps to finally settle on a product that meets their expectations, you'd be correct in assuming that if the product does what it is asked, a business likely wouldn't be considering going through a long, drawn-out process again within the next 6-12 months.

Having your product clearly advertised, alongside knowledge of what your audience's pain points are, will assist in combating competitors' B2B marketing. But by advertising your B2B loyalty program, you provide additional security and peace of mind, showing your audience not only an awareness of their pain points but also a clear demonstration of how it solves them and repeat purchases from their peers.

### **Customer Loyalty Programs Provide a Sense of Belonging**

With safety needs met, the program should then move on to belonging. This may seem simple, but there are a few ways you can ensure that belonging is provided, which will assist with your buyer's journey as well as marketing efforts.

A well-presented and stated case for how your product or brand can assist in eliminating pain points for businesses during the research stage of the buyer's journey will demonstrate an understanding of the issues faced, reassuring your channel partners that they are in the right place.

Because the research stage can be a stressful time, providing comfort that your product can alleviate the problems that the business is currently facing can be a strong step forward in keeping your brand front of mind during the buyer's journey, which will place you ahead of competitors.

In addition, once the sale has been made, using your B2B loyalty program in marketing communications can also work towards establishing a community that can [incentivise repeat purchases from existing customers](#). By highlighting recent success stories in your emails and social media posts, you can illustrate what benefits of doing continued business with your brand can establish and can almost provide a "FOMO"-type mindset that will encourage further engagement.

By segmenting your communications directed to those who have set goals and are nearing their target and using these comms to show how those in the community have succeeded in their goals, you can use the benefits of belonging to the community you have cultivated to drive sales and hit your dream growth targets!

### **Esteem: Creating Validity Out of Your Customer Loyalty Program**

This need can almost be seen as the counterpart to the belonging step and can operate together. While the belonging step can cultivate a sense of community to drive sales growth, the need for esteem can be utilised by those who have already succeeded within the program.

Showing recent wins in your communications and in sales pitches can show your customer base how by simply using your product, which has already been shown to understand and solve the pain points facing their business, you provide them with an understanding of a greater value that can be achieved simply by doing what they were already going to be doing – using your product or services to solve their pain points and make their lives easier.

This can be assisted by ensuring that your B2B loyalty program has aspirational rewards that are crafted for your well-defined audience of channel partners. If your goals aren't chosen specifically for the audience, you will lose engagement and miss out on the benefits that can be provided by your program.

Since 1997, we've always aimed to solve the strategy first and come up with appropriate rewards to motivate your targeted audience, so if you're on the fence about what a B2B loyalty program can do for you, reach out today for a consultation and let us show you what your brand is missing out on by not having a B2B loyalty program!

### **A Sense of Self in Your Customer Loyalty Program**

As mentioned above, the ability of participants in the program to set point targets in loyalty programs can drive sales growth to previously unseen levels. By providing rewards that your channel partners value highly and demonstrating how additional purchases throughout the course of business can allow them to achieve this, your program can do the heavy lifting on increasing profits through a well-crafted B2B loyalty program.

This step can be achieved by ensuring that your sales team is fluent in your program and the customer's position within it, as relationship meetings can be used to illustrate how close the customer is to reaching these rewards, and what it will take to earn them.

So, how is your brand currently providing and nurturing the basic needs of your customers, and elevating them to reach aspirational targets? If you're feeling like you can be doing more to encourage your audience to engage with your brand and product, and are serious about elevating your sales growth, reach out today.