

## WE NEED TO TALK

“We need to talk.” When you hear these words it means someone is going to break up with you. Researchers analyzed Facebook status updates and recognized a trend. People are more likely to split with their partners around Valentine’s Day, Spring Break, and two weeks before Christmas. The reasons are apparent, but business break-ups are less obvious.

Do your customer’s “need to talk”? If you notice a trend in customer break-ups, how do you handle the situation? Customer break-ups are inevitable, but there are certain relationships worth saving. Keep a watchful eye for your customer’s wandering eye. Customer’s eyes might start to wander in the following situations:

- A more attractive price
- Mergers & acquisitions
- New decision-makers
- New management teams
- New competitor
- Repeat service failures
- Price increases
- Employee layoffs

The first step is to analyze your own business trends to identify situations where customers break-up. The situation can be seasonal, a singular event, or a culmination of events. It can be a certain time of the year, it can be after three complaints, they might ask for price relief, or request services you don’t provide. The key is to recognize the events as trends, rather than coincidence.

Next, you need to utilize your social intelligence and empathize with the customer. You need to make sure you understand their position. When you have a better understanding of the customer’s situation, you better understand their needs. The best way to empathize with your customer is to put yourself in their shoes. A gut check question to ask, “If I were the customer, would I want to break-up with me?”

The simple act of empathizing with the customer will make you a better sales and service professional. Once you have empathized with the customer, you need to work on re-building the relationship. The quickest way to stabilize a choppy relationship is to empathize with the customer. Then develop an action plan detailing how you will be more responsive to the customer’s needs. The plan should be detailed and specific. Develop a plan to handle your customer’s special requests. Be careful not to overpromise. You must be able to deliver on what you promise.

The final piece is executing your detailed plan. You must deliver on what you promise. When you continually come through for the customer, you are rebuilding a stronger relationship than the original. Make this customer a priority, the same way you prioritize a wounded personal relationship. Consider spending a little extra quality time with these customers.

“Let’s still be friends” or “it’s not you, it’s me.” If you hear this phrase then you are breaking up. The best course of action is to reassure the customer. Let them know you are always going to be there for them. Just because you are breaking up today, doesn’t mean you’ll never get back together with them. Remain graceful and send them an occasional reminder. Then they will know you are still interested and still there for them.

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