



PRESS RELEASE
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'National Customer Service Week' highlights importance of customer loyalty

Companies nationwide are supporting a week dedicated to raising awareness of customer service and the vital role it plays within organisations across the UK. National Customer Service Week, which commences on 5th October, will highlight the many benefits of focusing on customer service within businesses and allows companies to thank their workforce for their dedication within this area.

This includes leading independent travel company Travel Counsellors, who claims there has never been a more crucial time to recognise the importance of service and customer loyalty. The company has over 700 travel agents in the UK who all run their own businesses from home, with the main ethos of the company being a focus on customer service and the ability for agents to build their businesses on customer loyalty and retention.

"The recession has meant many companies having to re-evaluate their business models, which has often meant a firmer focus on the customer and retaining their loyalty," says Travel Counsellors Managing Director Steve Byrne. "The only way to survive and continue to move forward in the customer service field is to deliver the very best customer service so that your customers come back to you time and time again. Customer loyalty is key and it is always something we have always focused on within our business model. Our agents are encouraged to build relationships with their clients, getting to know them and their needs so they can build trust and deliver a tailor-made, personal service. National Customer Service Week will hopefully encourage other companies to do the same and commend those who are successful in doing so already."

Research from the Strativity group has found that loyal customers are almost three times as likely to expect to continue doing business with companies for another decade or more. More than 70% of consumers also say that they are willing to spend 10% more with businesses if those businesses exceed their expectations. These findings speak volumes in the current climate and with so many companies failing it is becoming clear the focus has to be on customer loyalty and retention.

"Companies can measure their customer satisfaction using a number of techniques," says Steve. "One of the most popular and world renowned methods is through the Net Promoter Score system. Customers are asked one question - how likely it is that they would recommend the company to their friends and colleagues, with the answer scaled from 0 to 10. Since adopting the NPS system two years ago we have constantly achieved a world beating score of over 90%, far outpacing the majority of other companies who use this system. We believe this is fundamental to a business' success and whilst we see many companies within our sector failing at this difficult time, our sales are strong and our repeat business is high."

Founder of the NPS system Fred Reichheld believes that companies that embrace a culture of loyalty enjoy customers buying again and again, trying new products, giving referrals and providing constructive feedback. This has certainly been the case for Travel Counsellors who have experienced double digit growth year on year since founded in 1994, with sales for September up 14%, bucking the current trend within the travel sector which has seen an average x% downturn in business this year.

Steve adds; "National Customer Service Week is a great opportunity for businesses nationwide to take note of the importance of the customer experience, the value in investing in this and its significance in the future success of an organisation, especially in the current climate."



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About Travel Counsellors: Travel Counsellors is the world's largest home-based travel company with turnover at the end of its last financial year (Oct 31 2008) of £245 million, a 16% increase year on year. Founded in 1994 it currently has over 1,000 travel consultants who work from home with the support of over 200 staff at the company's UK headquarters in Bolton and overseas offices. The company operates in the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, South Africa, Australia, Canada and the US. In the UK, the Travel Counsellors Trust financially protects everything booked by the customer free of charge. Travel Counsellors was the winner of the prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise in 2003-2008, the technology category of the 2005 CBI Growing Business Awards and was voted Travel Agent of the Year by readers of the Guardian, Observer and Guardian Unlimited in 2006 & 2007.

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