

What to do on a Friday Night: Smart Marketing Strategies for Bar and Nightclub Owners

Targeting New Customers and Encouraging Repeat Business

- Jay Siff

There are three ways to grow your business; 1. Generate new customers, 2. Encourage existing customers to become more frequent repeat customers, and 3. Increase the average amount your customers spend. In this article, I will outline a tried-and-tested strategy to generate new customers and encourage repeat business, allowing you to focus on boosting individual sale revenues through special product offers. The ideas I present have helped thousands of small businesses just like yours succeed through expanding their customer base and driving repeat sales. But before we get down to business, let's begin with a short story:

You've just arrived to your new home. Your living room is filled with boxes, and your mind is full of the excitement that comes with changing locations, changing routines, and maybe even changing jobs. You're ready to celebrate.

But you don't know that much about your new location. You don't know which spots are hot, and which are not. Which clubs offer drink specials, and which have dress codes. You're ready to have fun—but now if you could only decide on where.

Sound familiar? Many individuals have been in this situation after moving to a new location; they're eager to get out and explore the nightclub and bar scene in their new towns, but they don't know where to go or who to ask.

As a nightclub or bar owner, these new movers represent a perfect opportunity for you to draw new customers to your location, some of which will likely become your nightly "regulars." But how do you speak to these new movers? How can you attract them to your locale when they don't know anything about the area?

Simple. *You make them an offer they can't refuse.*

The best way to capture a new mover's attention is to speak to them directly. Send a letter your new mover's home, welcoming her to the neighborhood. Briefly introduce yourself and your business in the letter, and present the customer with an irresistible offer, such as a \$20 gift certificate at your establishment. No-strings-attached, no "buy one get one free" offers—just a certificate inviting your new mover to have a night out *on you* at your establishment.

Chances are you'll see that new mover on Friday night. She'll walk into your bar, armed with your offer for a night of free entertainment, and present you with a chance to create a repeat customer.

People are creatures of habit. If they go to a bar and receive quality service in a fun, friendly, and safe atmosphere, they will most likely think of the same establishment next time they feel like cutting loose.

It's your job as a business owner to make sure that each new mover that enters your bar or nightclub has a great time and leaves excited to return. Make sure your employees provide customers that present New Mover gift certificates with the best service and products available. Explain to your bar staff that these individuals have come to your establishment with a no-strings-attached gift certificate and will most likely tip their wait staff *very* well. The key is to give your customers a reason to visit you in the first place, and then show them such a good time that they will be eager to return.

While building new relationships with customers is an important part of running a successful business, learning how to drive customers to your door when you need them the most is equally significant. You've already started to attract new customers with your New Movers program, but you must also begin to start reaching out to your current customers and encourage them to visit your business again and again during times when they normally may not. And here's how to do just that.

Next time a new customer presents a New Movers gift certificate, ask that she sign the back of the offer and provide an email address. Use these email addresses—as well as those you should be collecting from existing customers—to build up a database of individuals that you know have visited your bar or nightclub in the past and have most likely had a good time. Next time you're expecting a slow Tuesday or Wednesday night, create a special offer—say, half price on wells and taps—and email a certificate to the customers who have previously provided you with their email addresses. While they may not usually go out on a Tuesday or Wednesday night, if you impressed and entertained them the last time they visited your establishment, most will probably think about stopping by for a drink with their colleagues on their way home from work that night.

And there you have it. You've turned a slow night into one that has filled your bar or nightclub with familiar faces.

Peter Drucker, a recently deceased marketing guru, said it best when he said that “the purpose of business is not to make a sale, but to make and keep a customer.” You must aggressively market your business to customers by providing them with a reason to try out your services, and must impress them enough that they will always be eager to return. In addition, smart businessmen know that the best way to foster repeat business is to target previous customers with offers and specials that they will find hard to resist. Follow these strategies, and your nightly list of “regulars” will continue to grow and grow.