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## **BUSINESS OWNERS: CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IS KEY**

As a consultant for people who are considering starting their own small business, I naturally have many things to share with people. Clients come to me with a host of questions about the process of starting a business and about the details of what to focus on above everything else. Once we have talked through the logistics and the finances that are necessary in starting a business, I quickly move into talking about the keys to running a successful business. The first key that I always talk about is customer satisfaction.

Before I share with clients that customer satisfaction is my number one key to success, I make them list in order of priority what they feel are the top ten keys to success in their future business. This is important because it gets them thinking about their goals and about actually having to perform for their business to be a success. Most of the time my clients rank customer satisfaction somewhere in their list, but it is very rare that it makes the number one spot. They are shocked when I reveal my list and they see customer satisfaction all the way on the top.

I feel strongly about customer satisfaction for many reasons. I guess the biggest reason is that the whole purpose of a business is to invite customers and to meet a need that they have. If business owners and potential business owners lose sight of the fact that they are in business for the customer and not for the money, then they will never have a successful business. I find that businesses are prosperous and long-lasting to the degree that they truly do make customer satisfaction the center of all they do.

Customer satisfaction means a variety of things for the business owner, but the main thing it means is that the needs of the customer are the bottom line and the driving force behind all decisions that are made for the business. It means that gaining and keeping customers is important enough to a business that they are willing to make changes if necessary based on what customers want.

Customer satisfaction is the missing key in many struggling businesses. Give customers what they want in a way they want and in a friendly matter and many more of our companies would be doing better. Customer satisfaction is hard to achieve, yet with intention and care it can be rewarding for everyone involved.

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