



Episode # 178: 3 Ways to Earn More From Clients You Already Have

Janice Hostager: [00:00:00] Your next best clients, they're the ones that have already paid you. Yep, not the stranger on Instagram, not the cold lead that you've been chasing for weeks, the people who have already said yes. Early in my first business, my design agency, I worked with a lot of customers who needed some design work done as they started up their new business.

Often, that was maybe a logo design, a business card, and so on. But almost always after getting those things done, they'd ask, "Do you know of anybody who can help me with blank?" It could've been a website, a sales page, or so on. That's when it hit me. - limiting my scope with only the basics gave me no offer ladder, which is a process where I could keep a customer coming back for more based on the needs that they will have next.

So today, we're talking about how to earn more from clients you already have without chasing new customers all the time. The experts have a name for this: customer lifetime value, CLV for short. But this one number is kind of the difference between a feast or famine business and a business that actually feels steady.

Customer lifetime value is the total amount a client spends with you over the whole relationship, not just one project, all of it. Here's why that matters right now more than ever. Getting a new client is a slow process. They have to find you, trust you, compare you, and then finally buy. That's most of the whole trail to the sale, right?

And it's expensive. Ads cost money, brochures cost money, coffees to talk to new clients, time spent finding them. Your existing clients already trust you. They've already walked that trail.

That's especially valuable these days because AI is gobbling up a lot of the small one-off projects, but relationships are a lot harder to replace. So by the end of this episode, you'll know the three numbers behind your CLV, one strategy for each, and a quick gut check to find out which one is leaking money in your business.[00:02:00]

So stick around for that gut check. It takes about 30 seconds, and it tells you exactly where you should start. Okay, so customer lifetime value is made up of three things: how much they spend each time they buy, that's your average order value; how often they buy, that's the purchase frequency; and how long they stay with you, That's a customer lifespan.

Multiply those three together and you've got your customer lifetime value. I actually have a calculator on my website that does this for you, and I'll put the link in the show notes. Now, here's the part that I love. Because they multiply, small changes stack up fast. Let's say a client spends two thousand dollars with you.

They buy about twice a year, and they stick around for two years. So that client is worth eight thousand dollars. Now let's nudge each number up just twenty percent. They spend twenty-four hundred dollars on a project. They buy a little more than twice a year, and they stay almost two and a half years.

That same client is now worth about thirteen thousand eight hundred dollars. Same client, same you, but a seventy-three percent jump. Now, a quick note. This customer lifetime value might seem like a number that's just not all that important unless you're meeting with your accountant.

But if you're running ads or spending any money to bring in new clients, which most of us have to do, this number is really important. If you on average spend fifty dollars to get a new client, but you know that your average customer lifetime value is two thousand dollars, then you're golden, right? I'd trade fifty dollars for two thousand dollars any day.

But if it costs you fifty dollars to get a new client and the customer lifetime value is only forty dollars, then you've lost money. So it's important to know this number to make sure that you're not overspending on client acquisition. Okay, so that was just my note.

So let's get back to the three levers to move on to increase your customer lifetime value. First, lever one, average order value. [00:04:00] Average order value is how much they spend each time they do business with you. You know, the most famous upsell of all time is McDonald's, right?

Speaker: Do you want fries with your order?

Janice Hostager: That's why that part of the Trail to the Sale is called Supersize, by the way. McDonald's sold a lot of fries with that one little question, and it doesn't feel really pushy even, does it? It's the right offer at the right moment, and it makes the meal better.

Or think about Amazon. You add a phone to your cart, and then right there it shows you a case and a screen protector. It says, "Frequently bought together." Well, yeah, you're gonna need a case. So those are just two ways where you can raise your average order value. An upsell is a bigger or better version of what you're already buying, the VIP or the deluxe version.

A cross-sell is something that goes with what they're buying, a phone case. So what does that look like in a service business? So it could be a web developer that builds the site and then offers a monthly maintenance plan, or a coach that sells a three-month program and then sells tech support between sessions, or a consultant that delivers a strategy and then offers implementation hours to actually get it done, or maybe a copywriter that writes the website and then offers a welcome email sequence that goes with it.

Notice something? Every one of those helps the client get a better result. That is the whole trick. So here's my rule so that it never feels salesy. Offer only something that helps them get the result faster, easier, or better. If it doesn't do one of those things, don't offer it, period.

And here's the flip side. If they're gonna need it anyway and you don't offer it, they'll hire somebody else to do it, or worse, they'll struggle through it alone. That's not being humble. It's you leaving them hanging. Now, when you offer it matters a lot. The easiest time is at the moment they buy.

Build it right into your proposal. Give them a base package and a couple of [00:06:00] add-ons they can choose. Then there's no awkward conversation needed. The second best time is right after a win. They just launched their site, they just landed the client, and they're happy. That's when they want to keep it going.

It feels natural at that time, and on the trails to the sale, this is that supersized stage, and it's the one that many skip. For me, I have an offer ladder. It starts with a low-price product, like my marketing summer camp,

And at the end of that, I offer the next thing, such as Modern Marketing Mastery . So your homework for this lever is to write down one thing your client usually needs after they work with you. That's your add-on.

Okay, lever two is purchase frequency. This is how often they buy. Let's talk about the queen of frequency, Starbucks. Starbucks Rewards members drove nearly 60% of Starbucks' US company-operated revenue in 2025.

That's more than \$13 billion. And here's what got me. Their brand chief said it, if just half of their active members came in one extra time a year, that it earns them about \$150 million. One visit once a year. That's the power of frequency. Amazon Prime is another great example. A research firm called CIRP estimates Prime members spent about \$1,170 on Amazon in 2024.

Non-members spent less than half that amount, about \$570. But prime members don't spend more per order. Their average order is almost the same as everybody else's. They just shop way more often. That's frequency, and it wins all day long.

So to be fair also, the researchers point out that maybe Prime makes people shop more, or maybe big shoppers are the ones who sign up for Prime. Probably a little of both. So what's the small business version? Maybe a good old punch card. You know, like buy nine coffees and the tenth is free. It's simple, but it's genius because it gives you a reason to come [00:08:00] back. Your version depends on what you sell. If you sell sessions or hours, like massage or coaching session, bookkeeping hours, VA hours, a digital punch card actually works well.

There are tools for this. One is called Loopy Loyalty, or you could probably even build one with AI

But, and this matters, be careful with the 10th one's free mentality. When you give your expertise away as a prize, you teach your clients your time is worth less money. So instead, award them with something that costs you little but feels big. Priority booking, a bonus strategy review, first dibs when you open a new program, or maybe it's swag that you have.

That's loyalty without the discount. Now, if you sell projects, like a website, a brand, a launch, a punch card doesn't really fit. Your frequency play is rhythm. Give them a reason to come back on a schedule. The annual planning session every January, a quarterly checkup, a website refresh every year and a half.

And here's the key. Put it on the calendar before the project ends. You could say, "Let's book your six-month checkup now." There you go. Done. My hair salon does this all the time. So does my dentist. It's easy when you're there just to book your next appointment. So your homework for this lever is to decide one reason a past client would come back in the next 12 months and then put it in front of them.

Okay, lever three, customer lifespan. This is the last lever. This is how long they stay. There's a classic piece of research from Bain & Company. He found that increasing customer retention by just 5% can increase profits from 25 to 95%.

That's a wide range, and it depends a lot on the industry.

And the research is decade old, but the logic still holds. Clients who stay cost less to serve. They tend to buy more, and they send their friends to you. Here's what I've noticed about clients [00:10:00] who leave. It's rarely one big disaster. They just kind of drift away quietly. You get busy, they get busy, and six months later you realize you haven't talked in forever.

So lifespan is really about not letting them drift away. This is the serve stage of the trail to the sale. There's a few ways to do it. First, nail the beginning of the relationship. The first few weeks set the tone for the whole relationship. A very clear welcome, a clear plan, and a quick win early on.

When clients feel taken care of from day one, they relax and stay longer. They might even look for a reason to do more business with you. Show them how working with you has built-in wins. People forget progress. It's human. So I like to remind them. A quick monthly note that says something like, "Here's where we started, and here's where we are now." that email does a lot of heavy lifting at renewal time. Also, start the conversation early. Don't wait till the last day of the contract.

About thirty days before, say, "Here's what we got done. Here's what I'd like to tackle next." Now it's a plan instead of a pitch. And then check in after the work is done, thirty, sixty, ninety days later. You might say, "Hi, how is the new site working out for you?" It takes two minutes, and it keeps you top of mind for when they need you again.

One thing I've learned that even if the relationship is going well, they do forget their progress. With my fractional CMO clients, I try to show them at monthly meetings where we're looking at their analytics, and I just put it in front of them. "Here's where you were then, and here's where you are now."

HubSpot has a free CRM. You can set follow-up tasks on any contact, and it'll remind you by email or push notification. However, on the free version, I think you set those reminders yourself. It won't automate them for you. But honestly, a reminder you set yourself beats a great intention that you forget. Okay, let's wrap it up. Customer lifetime value is three numbers multiplied together: how much they spend, how often they buy, and how long they [00:12:00] stay. And because they multiply, small improvements in three areas can add up to a big jump without finding a single new client.

None of this is about squeezing people. Every lever works best when you're serving clients better. Now, here's the gut check that I promised.

Three quick questions. So I want you to ask yourself, when a client finishes working with me, do I have a clear next step to offer them? If that's a no, start with your average order value. Number two, do my past clients have a reason to come back on a schedule? If that's a no, start with frequency. And number three do I know when a client is starting to drift? If that's a no, start with a lifespan pick the question with the loudest no. Fix that one first, just one, and you'll be amazed at what happens. All right then, if this episode was helpful, just hit follow on whatever app you're listening to right now. That way next week's episode shows up for you automatically. For more information on anything I talked about today, or if you want any of the links from this episode, visit myweeklymarketing.com/178.

Thanks so much for joining me today. I'll see you next time. Bye for now.