

When Avon Doesn't Call: A Lesson for Internet Marketers

By Mary Anne Hahn

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Probably most of you have heard of Avon Products, Inc.

Founded over 100 years ago as a small perfume company, Avon has grown into a huge multi-billion dollar corporation that sells products ranging from cosmetics to clothing, jewelry and knickknacks to customers in nearly 140 countries.

Like many women, I have my own "Avon Lady," someone from whom I have ordered on a regular basis over the last couple of years. Mary works in the same office building as I do, one floor below mine.

I suppose Mary makes a nice little side income from her Avon customers. But Mary has a bad business habit that I think we can all learn from, and avoid.

Whenever I order items from an Avon catalog, Mary always delivers them to me promptly, in one of those little white Avon bags that the company provides. Inside the bag, along with the items I've ordered, she conveniently includes a copy of the newest Avon catalog. So far, so good.

But here's the thing--if, for whatever reason, I don't happen to order anything from the new catalog, Mary seldom drops me off a copy of the *next* catalog. Or the one after that. Or the one after that. In fact, if I don't order during a particular campaign, the only way I get a copy of the newest Avon catalog is when I call and ask her for one!

Now, how much business do you think Mary loses from me each year due to this oversight? Then, multiply that number by the amount of business she loses if she handles all of her regular customers the same way, which I imagine she does. Failure to follow up with her regular customers probably costs Mary hundreds of dollars each year. Maybe more, if any of her customers decide to switch to another Avon distributor.

You might wonder why *I* don't try to find another, more reliable Avon Lady. The sad fact is, Mary's unreliability saves me money. Because I don't always have the latest catalog, I don't make impulse Avon purchases. When I start to run low on a favorite product, I give Mary a call. If I had an Avon Lady who followed up with me regularly, I'd probably buy twice as much as I currently do. The money I save, however, turns out to be Mary's loss.

In order to be successful, we cannot afford to take a Mary-like approach to our businesses. We need to keep in touch with customers who have purchased from us in the past--let them know about any new products or special offers. If we do, many of them just might purchase from us again. If we don't, many of them might wonder how we stay in business in the first place, and look to other people to purchase the goods and services they need.

Here's to your business success.

Mary Anne Hahn is a freelance writer who wants to encourage others to follow their dreams. If you're looking to start an online business on a shoestring budget, she invites you to join her at <http://goalsetter.buildreferrals.com> , or email her for more information at goalsetter@buildreferrals.com .

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