



Loyalty Programs Foster Engagement and Trust

Franchising's high-achieving multi-unit franchisees share views on key topics.

QUESTION: *How have customer loyalty programs best benefited your locations?*



SWEIGARD: "As a small-business owner, I am very focused on developing a strategic plan to grow my business consistently each year. For me, that edge is a special loyalty program that drives profitable business while enhancing the customer experience. Wild Birds Unlimited is a small niche nature store that specializes in the hobby of backyard bird feeding. Our customers are very passionate about the hobby and enjoy a close connection with the staff to discuss their experiences with bird sightings and feeding needs.

"Our loyalty program, called our Daily Savings Club, provides us with the key to expanding our customer base and helps our best customers to maximize their experience in each visit to our stores. As a multi-unit owner, a loyalty program is the best avenue to create a system that makes you the local expert and encourages your staff to develop close relationships with your best customers. Owning stores in different states means my employees are the key to local relationship building and the program. A substantial amount of our sales come from our bird food products and feeders, but our success is derived from developing a close relationship to our customers.

"Trust in a business is a culture developed over time and when you have a loyalty program that encourages your staff to do the right thing for you customers, you generate trust you can stand behind. Our loyal customers visit the store twice as often as our casual customers because they see us as much more than just a seed store. They view us as a friend that brings nature to their backyard. Our Daily Savings Club allows us to focus on programs that attract new customers and incentives that create year-round excitement for our loyal customers, which places us as a valued part of each community."