

## INNOVATION

# The Corporate Tip Jar: Profits As Customer 'Tips' For Good Service



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Forbes Technology Council COUNCIL POST

Mar 02, 2026, 06:15am EST

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## The Enterprise AI Scaling Gap

Think of your company as a fine restaurant and your customers as diners. Each dollar of profit is a voluntary tip customers provide to recognize excellent service and valuable offerings. Just as a waiter earns a big tip by delighting guests, businesses earn healthy profits by delighting customers.

Many corporate boardrooms treat tips as though they will always come automatically. Author Ken Blanchard has famously said, "Profit is the applause you get for taking care of your customers." Profitability is an optional reward that customers offer through their satisfaction with being valued.

Companies that sacrifice service for short-term financial gains receive no tips because they provide cold soup with scowling faces. We will analyze the relationship between customer tips and profits and the consequences of poor practices on revenue streams.

## Short-Term Hustle Versus Long-Term Gratitude

Numerous organizations' short-term profit strategies create adverse effects that damage customer trust and long-term satisfaction, constituting the tip jar. Several corporate stories demonstrate potential risks that companies should understand.

In the mid-2010s, Wells Fargo employees created millions of unauthorized accounts to achieve their sales targets. The bank temporarily increased its numbers until its deceitful actions became public, leading to \$185 million in fines and continuous significant expenses for rebuilding customer trust. No surprise: Lie to the customer and they'll snatch their tip off the table faster than you can say "oops."

The emission test scandal known as "Dieselgate" occurred when Volkswagen cheated on its tests to increase diesel sales. Sales jumped until "Dieselgate" hit. U.S. sales plunged 25% and global fines topped \$30 billion. The brand's reliable image evaporated and customers walked away for good.

The Boeing 737 MAX crisis (2018-2020) resulted from Boeing's decision to hide MCAS safety issues while trying to beat Airbus to market. This approach enabled the company to achieve fast market penetration and airline orders, but it resulted in two fatal crashes that killed 346 people, a 20-month worldwide flight ban, a \$2.5 billion settlement and permanent harm to Boeing's safety reputation with its customers.

Pursuing short-term profit hacks—such as fraudulent number manipulation, service cuts and customer exploitation—results in brief gains and lasting negative consequences. According to Adobe research findings, 49% of consumers will

abandon a brand when it uses tracking methods considered "creepy," and 39% will leave because they are treated as an annoyance while the company ignores opt-out choices. Customers react to harassment or disrespect by closing their wallets, so you receive no payment.

## Reciprocity, Trust And The Psychology Of Tipping

An examination of behavioral economics principles reveals how profits operate like tips in business. The human tendency is to reciprocate in favor of those who have shown kindness. Unexpected gestures such as hotel birthday desserts and software-as-a-service (SaaS) upgrades for loyal users create feelings of value, leading customers to express their gratitude through loyalty activities, purchasing decisions and referrals.

Trust fuels repeat business. A trusted company maintains high customer retention through its ability to charge superior prices. Trust exists as a delicate thing because any single violation of trust leads customers to disappear permanently. A waiter getting caught drinking your beverage leads to both the loss of your payment and your business.

When customers experience high value, they believe they received more than they paid for, which leads to their continued purchase behavior, positive reviews and acceptance of service errors ([78%](#)). The meal becomes worthwhile when you receive excellent service at a restaurant with extra bread.

In summary, the psychology is straightforward: Treat customers right, and they want to reward you. Treat them as targets to exploit, and they'll punish you.

## Don't Assume The Tip—Earn It

The service industry holds an unspoken principle: Don't assume a tip—go earn it. A restaurant that believes customers will continue paying regardless of service quality will soon discover an abandoned dining area.

The current market conditions of endless choice and instant internet reviews make customers feel unrestricted in purchasing power. A single negative experience will cause [32% of customers to leave](#) a brand they previously loved. Companies that deliver excellence to their customers will see [93% of their customers](#) return for

repeat business.

So, executive friends, some obvious but sincere advice:

- **Stop treating customers like wallets on legs.** Amazon CEO Andy Jassy explained it perfectly when he [stated](#), "We exist to make customers' lives better and easier every day."
- **Audit your "customer experience" honestly.** Is your marketing invasive? Are you bombarding inboxes with promos twice daily or after customers opt out? Such behavior effectively begs for no tip or even a slap.
- **Invest in quality and service.** Is your help desk hidden behind "cumbersome systems," "an hour wait on a phone," "no email support" and the like? [This Bain study](#) demonstrates how a 5% improvement in customer retention leads to a 25% increase in profits.
- **Empower frontline staff.** The Ritz-Carlton [grants its staff members \\$2,000](#) to resolve problems immediately because saving one customer represents immeasurable worth.
- **Play the long game.** Pricing manipulations will destroy customer loyalty. Instead of seeking immediate monetary gains, build long-term customer value through satisfaction delivery.

## Final Thoughts: Smile And Watch Tips Flow

Profits are a lagging indicator of customer satisfaction. They're the tip customers give you after you've delivered the goods—literally and figuratively. Trick the service, and those tips dry up. But if you delight customers, build trust and offer real value, they will reward you with loyalty and generosity. This isn't kumbaya—it's capitalist reality backed by tons of data, countless case studies and common sense.

So, the next time someone in the C-suite suggests squeezing customers because "Where else will they go?" imagine a diner being told their business isn't valued, and watch them walk out. There are plenty of eateries (competitors) out there.

Ironically, the old-school virtues (honesty, excellent service, treating people right) are the edgiest competitive strategy in the cutthroat modern market. Because in business, those who give the most get the most in return. And that's the real tip.



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Boris Kontsevoi is a founder and President of [Intetics Inc.](#), a leading global software engineering and digital transformation company. Under his leadership, a group of software engineers developed into a truly global technology company with multiple professional certifications, including ISO/IEC 42001 certification, for AI Management Systems, and industry awards, including the Global Outsourcing 100, Software 500, and Global Sourcing Association best of class company.

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