



When I was growing up, after some infraction and the resulting punishment, my dad would say, “I hope you’ve learned your lesson.” Considering some of the stunts my brother and I pulled repeatedly, it’s clear we often did not learn our lessons.

We aren’t the only ones.

Despite the many instructive examples out there, it seems there are some lessons many fail to learn. When it comes to customer loyalty, one of the most obvious mistakes is to take your eye off your current customers as you evolve, innovate, and court new ones.

Historical examples abound. New Coke was so soundly rejected by Coca Cola loyalists, the company brought back old Coke, re-branded Coke Classic, in just a few months. (Thus unwittingly creating one of the “classic” case studies in business history.) JC Penney tried to re-ignite their declining sales by hiring Ron Johnson, a whiz at Apple. He precipitously ended markdowns and coupons in favor of an Every Day Low Price (EDLP) strategy that left customers feeling confused and abandoned.

Businesses need to change. When customers have been “trained” to expect certain policies and experiences, that change can be very tricky. When a brand changes course, they need a strategy that is sensitive to customer expectations. Brands must balance changes that take away something customers like – a favorite product, a pricing strategy, a change in loyalty earnings and rewards – with features that add new value, or at least ameliorate any sense of loss. Changes should be introduced in ways that don’t create a shock to the system.

Trying to attract new customers at the expense of existing loyalists can often result in failure with both target groups. As the Girl Scouts say, “Make new friends but keep the old. One is silver, the other gold.”

So it wasn't exactly unexpected to read about the latest major brand to disregard the Scouts' advice. As quoted recently in *The Street*, Kohl's CEO Ashley Buchanan acknowledged that "Kohl's has become too focused on serving new customers and not its 'core loyal customers'...over the past few years, Kohl's has focused on attracting younger shoppers."

There are effective ways to introduce change without alienating customers. Such strategies include testing changes with small groups of customers, or in select markets; connecting with key customers to enlist their participation as influencers; and ensuring that customers are allowed a fair opportunity to use benefits and rewards before they disappear. It's a delicate process, which is why many marketers call in expert help to navigate transitions.

What has **your experience** been when making changes in your business?

©2025 schneideronloyalty | 6919 SE 144th Ave, Portland OR 97236

[Web Version](#)

[Forward](#)

[Unsubscribe](#)

Powered by
GoDaddy Email Marketing®