



ITA GROUP EBOOK

Brand Advocacy & the Emotionally Connected Customer

*How Authentic, Lasting Emotional Connections
Create Powerful Brand Advocates*

 ita group.

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The Power of Brand Advocacy

Everyone Wins

The evolution of customer loyalty has led to the rise of customer advocacy. Advocates are those who go beyond traditional loyalty to become ardent brand ambassadors.

Besides staying with a brand longer and buying more products, advocates also extend your reach through word-of-mouth promotion, social sharing and referrals. This translates to greater market share and profitability while lowering cost to serve.

The best part is, everyone wins. Your customers get their emotional needs fulfilled, and you get satisfied, engaged advocates who are innately driven to spread the word about your brand.



On average, brands generate a 650% ROI for every dollar invested in influencer and advocacy marketing.

—Tomoson

The New Loyalty Landscape

Why Product & Service Satisfaction Isn't Enough Anymore

Knowing your customer, their challenges and how you can support them has never been more important. According to PwC, 73% of all people point to customer experience as an important factor in their purchasing decisions. Furthermore, 65% of U.S. customers find a positive experience with a brand to be more influential than great advertising.

Brand empathy is driving fundamental changes in how companies service customers and requires a conscious effort at every step of their journey: online, on the shelf, at checkout and post-purchase.

That's why product and service satisfaction alone is no longer enough. To earn the trust of today's customers, brands must "get" them on a personal level.

Once it does, you get much more than traditional loyalty—you get passionate, engaged advocates of your business.



Increased Customer Advocacy Moves the Needle



Less Price Sensitivity

Advocates are five times more valuable than average customers because they spend more on products, and purchase more often.

—Infographic Journal



More Recommendations

A 12% increase in advocacy represents a 2x increase in revenue growth.

—Influitive



Amplified Brand Awareness

Advocates tell twice as many people about their purchases as non-advocates.

—ComScore



Share the Same Voice

Every brand interaction has the potential to reinforce or refute your customers' belief that you "get" them. If the rest of your organization isn't on the same page, you could be working against yourself. Socialize the importance of customer outreach with employees internally to ensure the shift toward this new way of thinking—and acting—is company-wide. Consistency breeds credibility in a big way.

Brands That Click With Customers



By focusing on amplifying the voices of their most ardent and surprisingly young fans and a steady flow of internet in-jokes and memes, Corn Nuts has tapped into the underdog spirit to win over millennial buyers. In eight months (and no budget), the Corn Nuts Twitter account grew from 650 to 21,000 followers and helped to increase millennial repeat purchases by 12%.



Starbucks represents more than a caffeine break for most customers. By creating a sense of community and inclusivity in its cafés and social media, it has become a “third place” between home and work for many. Everything, from its baristas’ name games to curated music selections, is designed to deepen its connection with customers.



The socially responsible retailer connects with like-minded customers by supporting causes they care about. Its activist spirit is reflected in every aspect of the organization, from supply-chain logistics to fair wages. But it’s the organization’s commitment to transparency that resonates most strongly with customers.



They Can Tell If You're Faking It

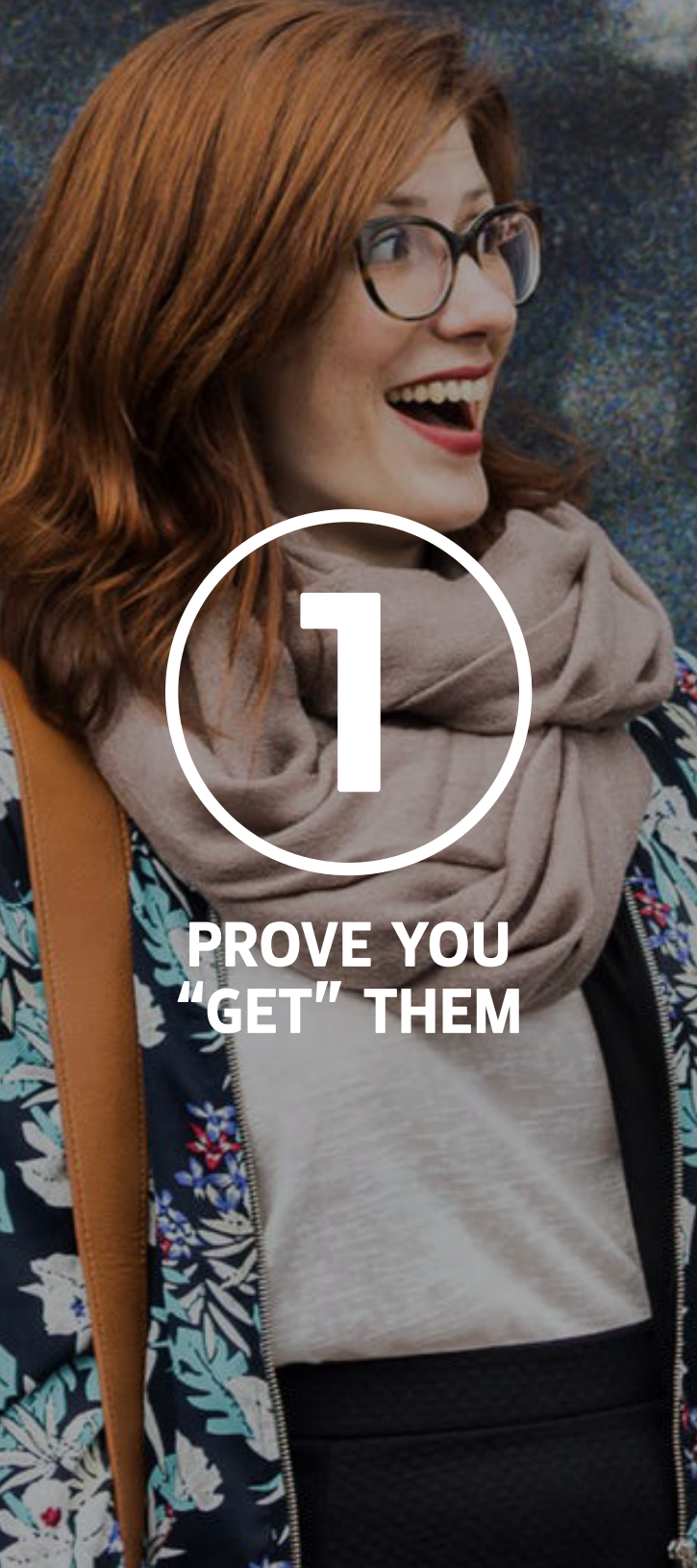
And if they doubt you're sincere, they'll dump you. Prioritize mutual trust and respect to create genuine connections—and focus on the experience, not the transaction. Great brands take their customer relationships further, incorporating traditions, practices and rituals that strengthen affinity and make the brand an integral part of customers' lives.

Translated: When you demonstrate willingness to fulfill their needs, customers will reward you with fierce loyalty.

How to Forge an Emotional Connection With Customers

4 Ways to Build a Relationship With Your Brand





PROVE YOU "GET" THEM

That starts with knowing what motivates them. Maybe your customers want to stand out from the crowd, or maybe they just want to feel good about their future. Motivations change depending on the industry, brand, touch point and customer's current position in the buying journey, which has likely changed in the last nine months—and will continue to change.

Once you've determined what makes your target audience tick, present a clear point of view that will attract those who are a strong fit for your brand. Be genuine at all times, and make sure messaging and interactions consistently align with your brand's value proposition.

You might be surprised by your customers' motivations. Rely on research, data insights and analytics rather than blindly guessing.



Emotionally connected customers are **2x as valuable** as highly satisfied customers.

—Harvard Business Review



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RALLY YOUR TRIBE

A strong community is a well-connected community—its members are connected to each other and share common goals and ideologies. As Seth Godin explains in his book “Tribes,” membership should be voluntary, dynamic, partisan and noisy. Mutual respect is essential.

Make it easy for your community to connect by giving them unique ways to communicate with you and each other. You can do so through online forums, polls and apps, but also consider organizing informal virtual get-togethers, or send a surprise gift to remind them how much you appreciate them. Shared experiences—from a meme to a pandemic—can cut across generation, culture and experience and bring individuals together.

Continuously engaging your brand community helps strengthen their sense of brand ownership. Make sure they know you hear them and respect what they have to say—and they’ll reciprocate.



9 out of 10
online customers
say they trust
recommendations
from friends and
family members
more than any type
of advertising.

—Nielsen



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ENCOURAGE EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY

Who knows your brand better than your own employees? Not only are they interacting with it on a daily basis, but they also see what you’ve got planned before the public does. Their exclusive access helps generate excitement within your organization, and it empowers employees to act as brand advocates in their own right.

More than half of your employees are already either employee advocates or have significant potential to become one. Maximize their impact by creating opportunities for them to spread advocacy to customers as well.

Use incentives and structured change management to transform your internal culture and encourage employees to live your brand message. It not only helps establish a consistent brand voice, but also improves credibility.



52%

of people see employees as “credible” or “very credible” sources of information about a business.

—Edelman



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MAXIMIZE BRAND VISIBILITY

While the idea of influence is becoming more and more common in today’s market (paid social media), it’s so much more than that. It’s someone with the ability to influence a potential buyer by promoting, recommending, and referring a product or service either online, in person or in some other way.

And going forward, these are the kinds of relationships that brands must turn to for getting in front of customers earlier in the journey.

This can be done through strategies for employees, channel partners and new influencer audiences.

To launch these types of programs, start with identification and segmentation, and pick programs that most easily align to business goals. Then slowly add additional influencer programs.



94%

of high performing companies have at least one-third of their eligible customers participating in customer advocacy.

—Forrester



Now more than ever, brands have the power to create authentic, lasting emotional connections. Show customers why they should connect with you.

Connect With Customers in More Meaningful Ways

With the rise of customer advocacy comes the opportunity to extend your reach to greater market share and drive profitability while lowering cost to serve.

The best part is, everyone wins. Your customers get their emotional needs fulfilled, and you get satisfied, engaged advocates who are innately driven to spread the word about your brand.

Want to learn more about how we can help? **Let's talk.**

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