

Who Are Your Best Brand Advocates?

 www.business2community.com/branding/who-are-your-best-brand-advocates-0559726

Debbie Laskey

Have you ever wondered who are the best brand advocates for your brand? You may think your repeat customers are the best advocates or the customers who spend the most money, or maybe new customers who do business with you as a result of their dissatisfaction with your competition. But the reality is, your best brand advocates are your employees.

Your employees spend each and every day creating a product or service that meets or exceeds the expectations of your customers. They interact with your customers, they answer questions, they resolve problems, and they repeat the process the next day and the next. But what really makes your employees your best brand advocates?

In order for a company to succeed, all employees must have a clear understanding of the brand promise. What does the brand stand for? What values are synonymous with the brand? What is the compelling benefit? Is there consistency each and every time you interact with the public?

Consider these brand promises. From FedEx: Your package will get there overnight – guaranteed. Or this from Apple: You can own the coolest, easiest-to-use, cutting-edge computers and electronics. Or this from the World Wildlife Fund: Building a future in which people live in harmony with nature.

Now consider these international brands: Coca-Cola, Starbucks, Nordstrom, BMW, and Zappos. While each conveys unique characteristics, there is no doubt that they are trendsetters. More importantly, their employees understand their brand promise – which is apparent in the way they do their jobs and interact with customers.

How many of us have walked into a Starbucks and been warmly greeted by a barista who strives to create our desired drink exactly as we want it? How many of us have wanted to make an online purchase on Zappos but had questions that led to an eventual purchase on another website?

The answer is many of us, because it's human nature to do business with companies that have clear brand promises presented or embodied by employees who can articulate and represent them.

Here are five strategies for cultivating your best brand advocates:

[1] Focus on the customer experience – develop a plan for how to interact with customers – don't leave customer interaction to chance.

[2] Commit to delivering the brand promise to customers – think critically about your competitive advantage and why customers should want to do business with you – and then craft your brand promise accordingly.

[3] Educate employees about the brand – take the time to train employees so that they are able to explain what makes your brand unique.

[4] Develop amazing relationships with employees – reward them when goals are achieved and surpassed and also provide picnics and other events that allow for employees to get to know each other as people and not just as employees.

[5] Provide each employee with the tools to do his or her job – make sure that your employees are empowered with the authority to make unhappy customers happy – this will lead to employee satisfaction.

When employees are enthusiastic about their jobs, perform their jobs well, are rewarded for their hard work, and genuinely enjoy coming to work every day, they actively promote the company to others. In short, they become your best brand ambassadors.