Turning Your Customers Into Fans

Who are your customers?

Regardless of what some people might tell you, you can't just turn any customer into a fan. There are some customers who won't talk you up no matter what you do with or for them. There are some customers that won't have any loyalty or desire to promote you to their friends and family.

And trying to convert them from customers into fans is the same as putting lipstick on a pig. All you end up doing is annoying the pig.

You have to know who are the right customers. There are customers who shop in your store and then there are ***your*** customers - the ones who want to carry your banner and sing your praises on top of the mountain.

So who are ***your*** customers?

How do you define them? By age? By gender? By income? By education? Would it surprise you to know that there are as many 40 year old women with master's degrees shopping at Wal-Mart as there are shopping at Nordstrom's?

Demographics

Too many businesses make the wrong assumptions about their customer base. They pigeonhole them into certain categories such as age, gender, income and education. Except in very general terms, those factors have never been reliable indicators of shopping habits.

There is no such thing as an average person, and there is no such thing as an average customer.

Think of it this way… What do you and your best friend have in common? (I mean best friend who isn't your spouse.) Sure, you might share age, gender and income levels. But what separates this person from all others in that demographic? Are there people in that demographic you would never want as a friend? Why?

Your friends are your friends because, regardless of age, etc., they share the same *values* as you. They have the same *interests* as you. They have similar likes & dislikes, similar experiences & feelings.

Psychographics

The customers who best identify with your store and become stark raving fans are the customers who, like your friends, share the same interests, feelings and values, regardless of their income, age or education. They are the customers who see themselves when they think of your store.

So to identify the customers you should be attracting, you have to know who you are and what you value. What traits or characteristics do you hold dear? What Core Values do you have in your business? Your most loyal fans will share those traits and values. If you don't know those traits, you won't know how to attract people who share those traits.

But if you do, and you make your business consistently aligned with those traits, you'll find your business attracting new customers from all walks of life.

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Your Core Values are Your Brand

Your Brand is every single interaction a customer has with your store, *plus how they feel about it.*

Branding is the process of creating and controlling the **feelings** people have about your business. You do that by identifying your Core Values and making your business consistent with those values in every single aspect of what you do.

Determine Your Core Values

What do you stand for? What are your Core Values?

Answer these 4 questions:

1. What part of your business would you **Never Compromise**?
2. What is your **Passion** in your business?
3. What do you **Believe** about your business?
4. How do people already **Feel** about your business?

The answers are your Core Values.

Does your business reflect your Core Values in everything you do? Does your business portray those Core Values to everyone? Do you instill those values in every policy, every procedure, every product, and every person on the team?

Your best customers will be the ones who most closely identify with your Core Values, regardless of income, education or age. They believe what you believe, value what you value. If you don't consistently show your core values, you can't attract those customers.

Make Them Feel Special

Okay, you've found your Core Values and attracted customers who align with those values. Now what?

You need to cultivate the relationship the same way you would with your BFF's.

How? By making them feel **Important** and **Special**.

Think about your circle of friends. What makes them your friends? How do you treat them differently than other people you know?

You probably know more about them, you know their likes and dislikes, you share your inner most secrets with them, you know how to make them feel good.

Have you tried to get to know your best customers this way?

Insider Information

One way to make your customers feel special is to share with them your secrets. Draw them into the inner circle of your business by telling them a little bit more than you would tell a complete stranger. Give them news or info that no one else has, whether it is a tip on a new release of a popular product, or some behind-the-scenes

info on a company or product line.

Secrets make us feel special. When someone shares something with us we feel a closer bond with them. We feel like we are important to them and we feel empowered by them.

Best of all, most of us are lousy at keeping secrets. We want to share them because it feeds our ego and helps us draw people into our own inner circles.

Lagniappe (pronounced lan'-yap')

A Cajun word that means, " a little extra" or "an added gift". What happens to the bond you have with your friends when they give you an unexpected gift that came from the heart? How does that strengthen your bond?

What can you give in your business that is unexpected and special in meaning? Would that cause your customer to talk about you more glowingly?

Here are two examples of what I mean:

The Watch Battery

You stop in to your favorite jeweler to get your watch battery replaced. He takes your watch out back and returns a few minutes later all set to go.

You ask him "How much?".

He says, "It's on the house."

Of course you're gonna brag about him! For the small price of a watch battery, he just bought more and better advertising than he could buy traditionally for the price of a Rolex.

Dessert

You're out to eat at a fancy restaurant. All night long you see these beautiful desserts roll by. The dessert menu is on the table, but the prices are kinda high. Your dinner guests suggest maybe splitting one among the table.

Just then the waiter approaches and says, "You guys have been a great table for me tonight. I'd like to buy all of you your own dessert. What would you like?"

Not only will it be one of the best desserts you ever had, you'll be talking about it for years.

Months later when your friends say, "Where do you wanna go to eat?" You'll say, "How about so-and-so's? The last three times I went I got a free dessert!"

For the price of sugar and flour, the restaurant is buying some incredible loyalty and creating stark raving fans.

Note: Lagniappe only works when it is given freely and unexpected. It cannot be advertised or marketed. Do it, but don't talk about it.

Social Media

Okay, you've brought them into the Inner Circle, made 'em feel special with Lagniappe. Now what?

Give them a platform to talk about you.

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Facebook is the king for this. Set up a Fan Page for your business. Put it on your website, on your receipts, in your Lagniappe. Drive your best customers to become fans of your store. Then pepper them daily with thoughts, comments and information (again, becoming an insider).

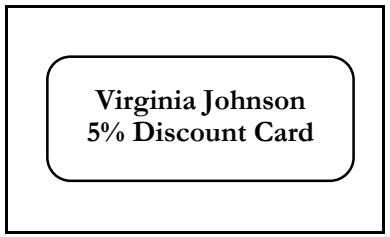
Set up discussions that encourage them to talk about you. Give them information and ask them to share it. Have surveys and polls. Ask questions. Start conversations. Be honest and admit mistakes. Be transparent and make it about building trust and relationships, not about selling.

Your Facebook Fans will quickly become your new Evangelists.

Evangelist Cards

Need another way to muster the troops into action?

Give your Evangelists your business cards with their name on the back and encourage them to pass the cards to their friends. Tell them that their friends will get a one-time 5% discount just for bringing in that card and that for every card of theirs that is used, they will get a $2 store credit (or whatever is appropriate for your type of business).



Not only will it make them feel even more special (more of an insider), they'll be financially encouraged to promote your business to the people they know.

Now your fans are recruiting new fans. Fans who share the same values as your fans and you.

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1. Identify your Core Values
    a. Make every aspect of your business Consistent with those values to attract customers who share those values
2. Make the Customers who share your values Feel Special
    a. Get to Know Them
    b. Give them Insider Information
    c. Give them Lagniappe
3. Empower them
    a. Use Social Media to build relationships, start discussions, and build enthusiasm
    b. Use Evangelist Cards to draw traffic