

Leveraging social media to turn loyal customers into brand influencers



Everyone's talking about social media as an increasingly powerful business tool –not only for marketing promotions but for improving customer experience through rapid response to customer needs and concerns. But some of the greatest value in social media may come directly from your customers. If they're delighted with your company and engaged in your social media community, any positive opinions about your brand that they broadcast online may be influencing the buying decisions of countless consumers.

In terms of brand influence, some of the greatest value in social media may come from your satisfied customers

Build loyalty through an actively engaged social community

As today's "digital lifestyle" is rapidly transforming consumer demands, it's getting harder for many businesses to keep up. But savvy companies are paying attention to where the action is. Social networks are the place to be, for both driving promotions but more importantly to invite customers into a community of like-minded others, to share their enthusiasm and experiences –and in the process, celebrate your brand.

- **American Express® on Facebook** - In [our social analytics case study of the American Express LinkLikeLove campaign](#) on Facebook, Beyond the Arc illustrated the bank's excellent example of how collective engagement in social media could successfully drive sales and customer acquisition. The campaign encouraged consumers to "like" various promotions, which helped target their preferences for increased relevance going forward. When both customers and their "friends" network chose to "like" Amex promotions, it spread awareness and drove new business.



Furthermore, to encourage customers to demonstrate brand loyalty, the bank has often posted provocative fill-in-the-blanks such as "This weekend I'm taking my Amex card to _____ with _____." As socially active customers often love to talk about themselves online, this clever tactic invites them to share experiences that make it seem "fun" to be an American Express customer.

- **JP Morgan Chase on Facebook** - As another example, our [Chase Corporate Challenge case study](#) highlighted how the bank used their sponsorship of an annual 5K foot race in cities worldwide to promote brand awareness on Facebook. With the bank's frequent social media posts amping up excitement as race days grew nearer, participating runners (both customers and non-customers) enjoyed engaging in the online community. While their connection may have been more to the event than the bank, people expressed appreciation for Chase's sponsorship. In particular, as proceeds from race registration and winnings are given to local charities, this social media promotion has increased the bank's image as a socially responsible company, which has helped strengthen perceptions about the brand to encourage new business.

Exploit the features unique to social networks such as viral advocacy.



How brand loyalty influences buying decisions

A important benefit of establishing a strong social media connection with your customers is that they may be more likely to remain loyal to your business and open to growing their relationship with you. That digital experience is a key part of the overall customer experience. But let's not forget why people engage in social media: to share their opinions. With social media, your business has a unique opportunity to give personalized attention in an otherwise anonymous public venue –which can be an effective way to delight customers into saying nice things about your brand.

This word-of-mouth is no longer just a marketing nicety; it's becoming mission critical in today's competitive landscape. Increasingly, consumers rely on their social network to find referrals to meet their needs and help them make buying decisions. They may ask their online friends directly, such as, "Does anyone know a good place to buy...?" but more likely people are influenced simply by seeing others talk about great experiences with certain brands, because that's the experience they want too.

It's even more valuable if your business is monitoring social media to capture what consumers are saying about their interests and unmet needs, because it provides you with a greater opportunity to influence their buying decisions. [Social media monitoring and predictive analytics](#) make it easy to uncover these insights from the volumes of data across numerous social networks so you can respond with relevant offers aligned with consumers' most current needs.

Seeing the big picture wins of social media

For many businesses, social media is simply a marketing tool, a venue to broadcast their brand story. However, to capture ROI from your efforts, your company should view social media as a critical component for managing the customer experience, and a valuable commodity for growing the business. That means listening to what people are saying online: their needs, concerns, and preferences, so you can take action to engage them in highly relevant ways that strengthen their connection to your brand. By building strong customer relationships --especially in social media communities -- you nurture brand advocates. Their free word-of-mouth advertising can influence millions of consumers, creating a profitable ripple effect for your business.

Let's Talk

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