
The care and feeding of ambassadors -- and their effect on your brand

Y'know, this branding business goes way beyond the creation of fancy logos, clever ads and cultivating good press. If you're savvy about branding, you'll also appreciate that the development and nurturing of good brand ambassadors is also vital to your survival and success.

We need to motivate ambassadors to champion our cause.

How often do we just take our employees for granted?

When was the last time you went out of your way to thank a vendor for making you look good?

How much trouble would it be to send an e-mail to an editor saying how much you appreciated the kind words he wrote?

Let's try to embrace the idea that, beyond just the paying customers for your product or service, everyone who comes into contact with you and your company is also a potential customer -- if not for what you sell, then for your good will.

What they say about you to others will become your brand. So doing everything you can to get them passing along a positive message is as important as the items or services you sell.

Go out of your way to say thank you and offer them rewards for their loyalty.

As I was thinking about this essay this morning, it occurred to me how important my employees and vendors are to our survival.

I thought I might make it a policy to include a small thank you note to them every time we send a payment check. Wouldn't the uncalled for little "extra" let them know how much we value their contribution to our end-products, make them feel appreciated and good about working with us?

Perhaps you could do this in your employees' pay envelopes once in a while? Knowing that the bosses and the company cares might help encourage support in return.

Everyone expects perks -- it's the unexpected ones that make a real difference.

I once worked at a big world-class agency that had a "hard-work" ethic.

The joke around the office was that: "If you don't come in Saturday, don't even bother to come in Sunday." But managers were allowed -- even encouraged -- to reward extra performance with SPA's (Special Performance Allowances). The unexpected trips, dinners and bonus checks did a lot to take the edge off the overtime. So, even though we joked about the crazy deadline pressures, most of us would jump at the chance to roll up our sleeves and pitch in.

And the message to the company's clients was that "this firm will jump through hoops for us."

Did the SPA's make a difference? You bet!

Incentives can help your company achieve its goals better.

I went online to see how incentives can help productivity. Incentive industry research studies have proven that an overwhelming 92% of workers surveyed indicated that they achieve their goals because they are incentivized.

But, while employees benefit from incentive programs, it is the company that actually benefits the most.

Findings from a *Watson Wyatt Worldwide* study indicated that companies with an effective program in place realized a median return to shareholders that was almost double that of companies which didn't have ways to recognize employees.

For some more study results, visit:

http://www.perks.com/science_industry.asp

Wars are won by inches. It's the little extras that count.

In the marketing and brand-building wars, our secret weapon is delight -- those pleasant experiences that exceed expectations.

As brand owners, it's our responsibility to continually look for unique ways of creating these experiences and over-satisfying.

Branding is not just an external issue, but an internal one as well.

Find extra ways to make your brand's delight real. Teach, empower and incentivize your managers, employees and friends to champion your cause.

Make it a delight to be associated with you -- and grow a delightful brand.

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Allan Gorman is owner of Brandspa, llc - a Montclair, NJ based branding and creative consultancy Download a copy of Allan's informative and helpful report: "*Ten Marketing Secrets for Building a Sexier Brand*" from <http://www.brandspa-llc.com> or send an e-mail to agorman@brandspa.net

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