



The Other Audience: Employees

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Who would take issue with the need for precision and purpose in the marketing message, crystal clarity in the brand promise, and frequent communications of both? Communication is the heart that pumps blood through your customer acquisition and engagement strategies. However, with various studies showing that the level of engaged employees in an organization tops out at about 30%, is it any wonder that your marketing efforts to engage customers can short circuit, spark, and burn?

Is it not possible, though, that the same communications principles and techniques that you use in your customer engagement efforts could and should be applied to internal marketing efforts? The consistent delivery of your brand promise rests squarely in the hands of your employees, and their success in delivering the brand promise is directly linked to their level of engagement.

A concentrated, integrated, internal marketing effort communicates not only the brand promise, but also each person's role in it. It communicates corporate values and the importance of practicing them. It aligns the organization's efforts with the customer's needs. It links incentives, training, and recognition and rewards programs to the primary mission of exceeding customer expectations.

As a marketer, you could easily say, "That's not my job. HR is responsible for internal marketing, sales is responsible for incentives, and training is responsible for ... well, training." And you'd be right. But if the entire delivery team is not populated with engaged brand ambassadors, your successes in getting people to test-drive, to taste, to call in, or in any way use your product the first time can be erased by an experience that produces a low rate of return. For you to get the most out of your customer engagement initiatives, your employee engagement programs must run on a parallel track, which means you must be the voice of a champion with the leadership team to produce Enterprise-wide Engagement.

Whether your point of contact is in a call center, on the retail sales floor, at a wholesale counter, in the field servicing, or in the office supporting, they all need to be armed and driven. They need to know what's expected of them, and they need to be motivated to deliver the brand promise. And as the CMO, you need them to deliver, or the power of your marketing efforts can be seriously diluted.

Communicate to Motivate

There are platforms available today that let you easily manage an enterprise-wide engagement strategy that complements your customer engagement initiatives. The purpose: to manage programs and processes seamlessly and to turn your employees from inward-facing to outward-facing—from focusing on what they do to concentrating on whom they do it for.

Let me be specific about the link between internal and external marketing.

Does your marketing strategy call for maximizing the number of different product sales to each customer? Do your people know that? Do you have any incentives in place to drive that behavior? Is it easy for them to make the referrals that are necessary to achieve the objective? If you can't answer, "yes" to every one of those questions, you're bound to achieve something less than the performance levels you need.

Does the Delivery Team entrusted with the brand promise know what the brand promise is? Can they verbalize it? Do they know what they have to do to deliver it? And in a larger sense, do they know the corporate values? Most importantly, have the corporate values been personalized for them to translate into their actions on the job?

Building an enterprise-wide engagement strategy begins with identifying a baseline of awareness and attitude. And a good enterprise-wide engagement platform has the testing process built into it. Once the baseline is known, an

incentive system needs to be developed to recognize and reward those who live the values and extend themselves to deliver the promise.

Going one step further, who is in a better position than your customer-contact people to translate the voice of the customer—their needs, feelings, and reactions—into new ideas? The key question is: is there a reason for them to take the time and apply the brainpower to generate those ideas? And is it easy for them to do so? The answer, again, lies in having a system of recognition and reward in place to provide the motivation and a streamlined process to facilitate it.

The Two Core Ideas

Internal marketing aimed at maximizing employee engagement to deliver the brand promise works for two reasons rooted in human psychology.

The first is aspirational. We all want to work for a company we can be proud of. A company of value—with values. A company where your external marketing message has framed an overwhelmingly positive impression in people's minds. And when the communications to your people builds a direct link between that reputation and their influence on it, it feeds into personal self-esteem.

However, giving people something to be proud of will only get you halfway there. The second reason is even more basic. Your external marketing efforts are designed to convince prospects and customers that the use of your product is in their best interest. Similarly, your people will do something readily when they perceive that it falls into their zone of self-interest. If your employee recognition, reward, and incentive systems are aligned with the behaviors you need to drive, and if people can earn meaningful rewards for exhibiting those behaviors, the results will follow. Ask for a behavior. Watch it happen. Reward it. Watch it again. Reward it again. Every single time.

Your objective is an enterprise-wide alignment with your marketing objectives. And the key to your success lies in remembering that the things that are important to your customers are the same things that are important to your employees. They want to feel important and appreciated.

Once you have a platform in place to manage your internal marketing strategy, you can begin the process. By identifying, communicating, and reinforcing the behaviors that you need to deliver the brand promise intact, you exponentially increase the chances of the performance matching the promise.

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