

5 WAYS TO TURN YOUR CUSTOMERS INTO BRAND AMBASSADORS

Thoughts & Observations from
the V2 Communications Team

INTRO

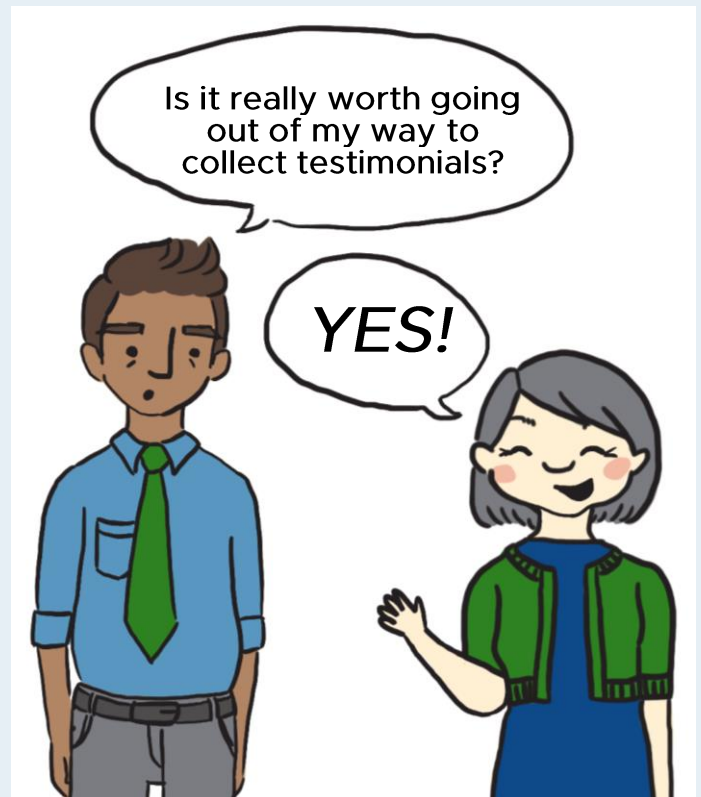
We are living in a review culture.

More often than not, people want to hear about new products and services from those who've used them rather than those who're selling them. That's why your current customers are your best tool in securing future ones and enhancing your brand's reputation.

You can influence new customers by leveraging loyal ones. According to the latest Nielsen Consumer Trust Index, 92 percent of consumers trust content from other customers more than traditional advertising.

Having a wealth of testimonials helps to build a consistent, validated brand image. Shape the conversation around your business by establishing a library of positive customer stories.

Enlisting your customers as brand ambassadors might seem challenging at first, but the payoff – for both your company's reputation and revenue – is huge.



Continue reading for our
5 BEST TIPS for turning your
customers into
brand ambassadors.

TIP 1: INK THE DEAL



The time to turn a customer into a brand ambassador is when you first sign them on. When you're writing up customer contracts, put the potential for media opportunities on the table immediately, and aim high. Don't stop at asking for a logo on your website; go for full participation in media and marketing efforts – quotes, testimonials, case studies, blog posts and Q&As. Even if customers don't agree to everything, you're still opening the conversation.

Customers will ask, **“What's in it for me?”** The answer is simple: free promotion. Present media and marketing opportunities in a way that offers your customers a chance to showcase themselves as smart business leaders, thought leaders and innovators. As part of your media strategy, customers in turn get positive spotlight for their own brands along with evidence that their customer experience matters to you.

Be sure to clarify the specific opportunities and platforms on which the customer testimonials will be presented. This will help customers know where and how their voices will appear, and it'll also help your team to articulate its PR strategy. Additionally, think of media outreach in the broadest sense. If your client seems averse to speaking to press, maybe try a smaller ask, like speaking at an intimate industry event, contributing to an industry journal or participating in a research project. Make your customers feel like industry experts.

People like to win.

Incentivize customers further by offering them something of value for their participation.

One option is structuring your customer intake program like a contest, in which those who contribute feedback are entered to win a prize. Be sure to express that you value their time and participation!

Alternately, submit customers stories as part of an award submission. There are numerous awards that are based on a customer-use case, and applying for (and winning) an award is a win-win for you and your customer – and it'll get you a documented case study of your brand's work.



TIP 2: MOTIVATE YOUR SALES TEAM... and YOUR PROSPECTS

Your sales and customer success teams are often the ones working closest with your customers and, therefore, the best members of your team for sourcing customer success stories.

Educate your sales force on exactly what makes a customer-use case pitch-worthy, and throughout that education process, reinforce the idea that it's also worth *their* time to help on this initiative, as these stories speak volumes to prospective customers.

Since prospective customers always want to see exactly what your product or service was able to do for others, a steady stream of convincing customer case studies will help your team lock down future sales. For example, a prospective customer seeing one of your current customers featured in a The Wall Street Journal story might be more inclined to sign on and to agree to marketing cooperation after seeing your efforts in action.



TIP 3: DON'T FORGET THE C-SUITE

Getting the sales team to cooperate is a priority, but it's equally important that the C-suite be on board with your efforts to reinforce the message that every customer story is important. If executives foster a culture that celebrates customer successes, that attitude will trickle down.

Additionally, the C-suite members should act as brand ambassadors themselves, delivering key messaging and value proposition internally and externally and promoting customer successes and the results your product can deliver.



Here's what can happen when one of your clients has media-friendly customers:

At V2, we've been able to secure top-tier coverage for our client UiPath, the leading enterprise robotic process automation (RPA) provider. We credit this to a successful company culture. CFO Ashim Gupta was once a UiPath customer who saw directly how RPA could help employees work more efficiently. He believed in the product so strongly that he left his company to work with UiPath. With the help of such an enthusiastic brand ambassador in the C-suite, it's easy to see why we've been able to secure top-tier feature stories about UiPath customers – their enthusiasm and energy are contagious.

This client's executives work directly with customers to ensure success, and when they achieve it, they help share the story. One of those stories we've shared for them is State Auto's, an automotive insurance company, a compelling story about how RPA helped them save 30,000 hours' worth of labor costs per year without eliminating employees with [The New York Times](#) and [CIO](#).

TIP 4: CREATE A CUSTOMER ADVISORY BOARD

When you treat customers like partners, they trust you and want to see you succeed. Developing a Customer Advisory Board is a good way to build those relationships.

Customers want to feel that their voices are heard, especially by the companies they've invested time and money in, and they will feel valued if you treat them like thought leaders and experts.

A thoughtfully run mechanism for listening to customers (which doesn't have to be overly formal) gives them the opportunity to speak freely about how they feel about your products and services while also giving you honest feedback about the kinds of changes you are considering or your customers are looking for, and more insight into which of your customers have positive stories to tell.



Create a Customer Spotlight.

Don't wait for a news opportunity to create some buzz around your brand. Set up a permanent feature on your website to showcase positive customer feedback, use blog posts, social media or a company newsletter to spotlight the best stories.

TIP 5: CONDUCT A CUSTOMER SURVEY

If customers are reluctant to speak out, so be it, but that shouldn't prevent you from creating compelling data or storylines. Opt for an anonymous or blind customer survey to gather data on the value of your product or service and get responses out of customers who typically remain tight-lipped. In some

cases, you may also be allowed to pitch quotes from them anonymously (for example, "One of the largest airports in the U.S. reports...").

If your findings are interesting, you can use them as a jumping-off point for media coverage, a blog post or social media. The key is to connect your results to current news or the current state of the industry. Not only can a survey showcase the value of your product, but it can provide data with which to assert your thought leadership and position you to speak to larger trends or changes in your industry. And if your results are fascinating or provocative enough, then even without a customer quote, you should have a story to tell.



CONCLUSION

While skillful reputation management has always been key to the success of a brand, never before has the atmosphere of review culture been more pervasive. The best tools for addressing this phenomenon are your customers, who make the strongest, most influential brand ambassadors.

Work with your team on how customer stories can map to your brand's unique business objectives. Maybe you launch a disciplined customer intake program? An open call for stories? A notepad at the ready to jot down quotes as they pass your radar? However you choose to collect and purpose customer content, when used strategically, it has the power to propel a business toward its biggest goals.

