



Creating Superfans

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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The Summary

Introduction

Whether you're just getting off the ground or you've been around for fifty years, one thing's for sure: if your customers aren't telling their friends about you, you're in trouble. Customers rarely, if ever, tell others about an average experience with a product or service. Too many businesses fall into the trap of becoming something lots of people "sort of" like instead of intentionally creating an experience that the right people can't stop telling their friends about.

A brand's fan base grows in large part because of the superfans who advocate on their behalf. Whatever it is

you do or sell, by the end of this book you'll know everything you need to know about creating superfans of your own. You'll be able to trend locally, nationally, or even worldwide, and create more raving fans for your business than you ever imagined possible.

Part 1: The SUPER Model

Creating superfan customers should be a top priority for every businessperson and brand today. This book provides a proven, easy-to-implement system that does exactly that. A superfan is a customer who is so delighted by their experience with a brand, product, or service

that they become an enthusiastic advocate. In simple words, superfans are customers who create more customers.

Let's break down the key elements in this definition as it is crucial in implementing a plan to create more superfans.

One qualification for defining someone as a superfan is that they have spent money with your company, as they won't be able to advocate in a meaningful way until a transaction has occurred. They need to be a customer.

The next key part of my superfan definition is who is so delighted by their experience. If you want someone to become a superfan, their experience must be outstanding, or at the very least, exceed their expectations.

The final part of the definition, becoming an enthusiastic advocate, is about your superfans telling people about you because they want to. Not because they're being paid or incentivized in some way by an agreement with your company. You create superfans by being so exceptional that customers can't help but talk about you.

Brands that learn to harness the power of fandom are unstoppable. Identity is a powerful thing, and once a customer starts identifying as your fan, it makes them feel a sense of ownership in your brand. Your story becomes part of their story.

Let's take a look at the stages a customer goes through to become a superfan, or as I like to call it, the Ladder to Superfandom.

People start from apathy, where they don't even know about your brand. Now, it's your job to find the right audience and bring them to the next stage: awareness. Here they know your brand exists and pay attention to your products. If you've got a great product and a strong message, finding people to pay attention becomes easier.

Especially with online advertising, it's never been easier to reach hyper-targeted audiences. By niching down into almost countless layers, you can land in the inboxes or social feeds of the people who fit the exact demographic and psychographic profile that you want to talk to.

Once you have their attention, it's time to develop interest or attraction. This happens when your marketing and messaging resonates with some people making them willing to consider spending money on your brand. At this stage, you need to show your prospect or customer targeted attention.

Everyone is busy, and even if they care about your thing, it's easy for them to forget or get sidetracked. Show every prospect that you care about them and want their business, and there's a chance they'll come back and an even better chance that they'll remember how you made them feel.

The action stage involves people graduating from "prospects" to "customers," which happens the first time someone pays money for your product or service. Just don't celebrate too long. This is where most businesses would stop putting in the effort.

However, there are still three more stages to go. At the action stage, it is critical to remind a customer why they chose you in the first place. Reach out to them asking about their experience, and offer highly personalized discounts for their next purchases. Figure out what percentage of your customers don't come back again after their first purchase and why. How can you improve that percentage? Focus on getting the second conversion from one-time customers as it's far easier to sell something to an existing customer than to make a new one.

Once they have spent money with you twice, they could move on to adoption, where they begin embracing your products or services and start getting used to them. Here, it's important to make each of their experiences just as good or better than the first one. If the first expe-

rience was solid, but then it started to be shaky, the customer might decide to give another company the chance to provide a more consistent experience.

Adoption leads to affinity when customers become exclusive to you and are unlikely to consider your competitors. You've won their loyalty, for the most part, but not necessarily their enthusiasm. Only after this stage can they reach the final one: advocacy. These are the customers that have felt love from you and love you back. Now, they're not just loyal, they're vocal about it. Well done! You've successfully led them to the top of the ladder.

Part 2: Start With Your Story

The easier it is for a customer to get what you're offering from a competitor, the better your experience must be. Otherwise, you'll be seen as a commodity and lose on price, speed, or any other variable that can be compared directly with your competition. So, instead of trying to lead with features and benefits, focus on creating a differentiated experience with an impactful story. Once a customer has an emotional point of connection, your competitors won't stand a chance.

Storytelling is all about positioning: the space you take up in your customers' minds. If you aren't clear on where that space is, they won't be either. Your story helps define your position by answering questions about what you do best and why that matters. Your story is your uniqueness. Once you've nailed it—and figured out how to connect it to your customers—you'll be unstoppable.

Remember that the purpose of any story is to connect with the audience. For that to happen, you first need to know your audience well, so that you can figure out your story accordingly. Understanding your audience allows you to establish a relationship with them and tap into their emotions.

There are many popular and helpful models for crafting stories that you can use. However, a quick rule of thumb is to make sure every story you tell passes the “Who, What, Why” test. It should be clear who the story is about, the main character or protagonist. The major plot point, what happens, is the event that creates the story worth telling. Without the “What,” the story will be boring at best, and apathy-inducing at worst. Finally, there is the “Why,” the most important component of all. It's there to explain why the “What” matters.

Remember: superfans are created at the intersection of your story and their own. If they don't care about—or worse, don't understand—your story, it's game over.

Part 3: Understand Your Customer's Story

Superfandom is a two-way street. If you want your customers to love you, you've got to love them back. Period. And, it's really hard to love someone you don't even know. That's why understanding your customer or prospective customer's story is key, and the second pillar of the Super Model framework.

The first step in understanding your customers' stories is figuring out their struggles and problems. One of the quickest ways to get a prospect to care about whatever you're selling is by showcasing that you understand their problem, perhaps even better than they do.

Secondly, understand what options they have. The worst approach here is to assume they have no other options. There is always another option, and it's not just your competitors. Your customer could decide to do whatever they want with their money. Understand that your option is never the only one, and then make sure that yours stands out and is the one of the customer's choosing.

Thirdly, don't skip past the customer's reservations. Instead, raise them before they do. Where possible, re-

frame what could be perceived as a negative in a positive light. Explain what common concerns about the product or service are, and how you plan to address them.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, to figure out your customers' stories, you need to ask them directly. Talk to them and ask questions that help you better understand the things mentioned previously. This will help you get a clear picture of the struggles, options, and reservations that your potential customers might have.

Part 4: Personalize

Most of us grew up with the Golden Rule: Treat others as you want to be treated. However, I want you to take this rule to the next level: Treat others as *they* want to be treated. Not everyone wants to be treated the same way. People have different backgrounds, experiences, and preferences. So, from a business perspective, customizing the “little” things, like asking your customers what their preferred communication method is (phone, email, text, etc.) shows that you're able to put their needs and choices above your own and make you appear easier to work with.

By incorporating a customer's preferences into your interactions, you're not only making the experience more enjoyable, but you're also showing them that they are important enough to merit individualized attention.

I'm willing to bet that the best gifts you've ever received were all highly personalized. They sure were for me. Yet, far too often, we settle for mass-produced mediocrity when it comes to corporate gift-giving.

Strategic generosity is one of the most powerful ways to create a “wow” experience for a customer and elevate the emotional closeness of a relationship. Not every professional works in an industry where they can leverage the power of gifts. However, where it is possible, it can be a very effective strategy as it shows the

other person that you're thinking of them. And it's not just about the gift itself or its cost; it's all about the thought, effort, and time that went into it. A thoughtful gift at the right time is always impactful, regardless of its price.

To create a thoughtful gift, you need to consider a few things. Make it unique for each customer. Mark the important dates such as birthdays and use them to surprise your customers. Don't restrict yourself to only sending gifts in December. Showing appreciation should be a year-round activity. In the holidays, you'd not only be competing with many other gifts, but it would also feel a bit forced and obligatory. Instead, consider less crowded gifting occasions like Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, etc.

Finally, don't forget that you're not trying to buy superfans, you're earning them organically, one at a time. So don't try to put your name or logo on your gifts. While no one would do this in a personal setting, businesses make this mistake constantly. If you give someone something with your logo on it, it's an ad, not a gift.

Part 5: Exceed Expectations

Everything that's in this book is, on the surface, simple. None of it is rocket science. Most of it isn't even expensive. And yet, that simplicity is deceptive. If it were easy, everyone would do it. It's by working tirelessly to ensure that the customer experience is predictably and consistently excellent, that you'll exceed your customers' expectations.

Experience is everything, and everything is experience. Every interaction contributes to the totality of a customer's experience, and therefore what they remember and share.

Regardless of the size of your business, you can follow a three-step process to make exceeding expectations the norm. The process is as follows: map, measure, maximize.

Map the customer journey and work to understand common needs and motivations at critical points of interaction. Create a simple and powerful journey map considering what each step of the Ladder to Superfandom consists of in your specific case.

You can't know for sure if you're exceeding customers' expectations unless you measure their feedback in some way. Metrics like CSAT (customer satisfaction) can give you information about what happens at the moment or immediately after an interaction, whereas EGR (earned growth rate) tells you the revenue coming from repeat and referred customers over time.

Finally, Maximize. Look for more and more opportunities to create moments of "wow" to elevate the ordinary to the extraordinary. Be so good in those strategic, repeatable moments that your customers can't wait to come back. Even one such moment can help erase the sting of minor annoyances along the way, so be intentional in your experience design.

Part 6: Repeat

Now that you are familiar with the process of creating superfans, it's time to rinse and repeat. Rethink your workflow each time and give more attention to how the "before" and "after" phases of each interaction have a compounding effect that's beneficial for you. Create checklists to track your specific steps and evaluate their effectiveness every time you use them. Do any items need to be added? Removed? Is more explanation needed to turn this list into a handbook for someone else on my team to use, either now or in the future?

It's very rare to get a list exactly right when you first create it. So don't worry if you don't think of everything right away. It's much easier to build systems as you're solving problems than to do a big brain dump of everything that could hypothetically be important at the onset. Start with an educated guess, and then add or sub-

tract in real time until your list becomes an indispensable tool to help increase the odds of success every time you use it.

When are you done refining your list? Never. The constant repetition of refinement is what sets Super individuals and organizations apart from their competition. Review your most important checklists at least quarterly. Even incremental improvements in customer experience can yield exponential increases in profits.

Part 7: Super-Groups Breakdown

Super Teams

It is highly unlikely that employees will treat customers better than they are treated. If you truly want to create a culture of super-fandom, you've got to start by treating your employees like the critical component of success they are. While the primary purpose of this book is to help turn customers into superfans the model for creating superfan employees is the same. And once you've got a team full of superfans inside the company, your superfan customers will multiply exponentially. Remember, your team is the heart of your brand. So, treat your employees so well that they can't imagine leaving.

Super Social Media

Many professionals have told me they find social media intimidating, believing they're "too old" or "too uncool" to keep up with an ever-growing slate of new networks and trends, each with its nuances and norms. Others are uncomfortable about its privacy implications. Many don't even see the need to incorporate social media into their businesses.

The thing is, social media has a lot of business potential. If you don't want to reach new customers via social me-

dia, someone else will be more than happy to take that opportunity from you.

If you do want to utilize the power of social media, forget about “followers.” Focus on fans: people who are excited by you and your brand.

Apply the SUPER framework to your social media presence too. Start with your **S**tory. Use it as a strategy that guides the creation and distribution of the content you share. Instead of always following trends and popular hashtags, establish a clear identity. Next, **U**nderstand your customer’s story. Know which social networks are most popular among your target audience. Establish your presence where your customers and prospects are, then, **P**ersonalize.

It’s social media, be social, **E**ngage with your customers, leave comments on their posts, interact with them through your content, and respond to direct messages. This will also allow you to exceed expectations. Instead of just commenting “Happy Birthday” on a customer’s post, send them a thoughtful gift. The content you post is also an opportunity to wow people, and you don’t need high production value to achieve that, just knowledge and creativity.

Lastly, **R**epeat. Consistency is key on social media. Don’t give up too early. Don’t jump from trend to trend because nothing seems to get you the engagement you want. Make a plan and stick to it.

Super Marketing

The marketing department’s impact is felt across all aspects of a business and at all stages of a customer’s journey, beginning with a powerful story. While each pillar of the SUPER Model has practical marketing applications, perhaps none is more critical than the first: starting with your story. Why does your brand exist? How is it actively improving the lives of your customers?

The answers to these questions should be the center of each of your marketing campaigns. You will of course tell several variations of your story for different audiences: customers, employees, investors, suppliers, etc. But the core of the story must remain the same, otherwise, you’ll never achieve alignment, and without alignment, it’s much harder for your brand to become memorable. So focus on figuring out your story before marketing your brand to potential customers.

Super Sales

The SUPER Model is just as applicable to sales tactics as it is to marketing. When trying to sell a product or a service, your story explains what makes you the best choice to help your customers and what makes your product or service the right solution to their problem. And most importantly, what you’re doing to ensure the entire experience, from pre-purchase to re-purchase, is one that’s worth raving about.

Super Future

I can’t tell you the number of times I’ve read a book and felt inspired, only to have that excitement and momentum die down in a couple of days. Or, to have it replaced by a new fire when I started a different book. Don’t let this be the end. Make it the beginning. Adopt the SUPER Model as your new mantra. Rally everyone in your orbit around turning your customers into superfans. As my favorite superhero, Captain Planet would say. “The power is yours!” I can’t wait to see what SUPER things you do with it.