



Building Advocacy Before the Purchase

By Doug Fleener

Most companies and experts look at the relationship businesses have with their customers in three steps with seven stages. Known as the Customer Relationship Lifecycle. (CRL) the three steps and seven stages are:

Pre-Purchase

1. Awareness
2. Knowledge
3. Consideration

Purchase

4. Selection or trial

Post-Purchase

5. Satisfaction
6. Loyalty
7. Advocacy

Too bad so many companies take this approach because it has a fundamental flaw. What's wrong with it? Advocacy should be in the pre-purchase step. Most companies think that only buyers can be advocates, but the fact is that some of your best advocates may not have made a purchase yet - and maybe they never will.

Smart retailers focus on building advocacy during the pre-purchase step for three reasons:

1. To potentially turn non-buyers into advocates.
2. To lead more buyers into becoming advocates.
3. To use the advocacy elements to influence the consideration stage and improve the purchase potential.

To focus on creating advocates in the pre-purchase stages, consider the following:

1. Teach your employees that some non-buyers actually create a lot more revenue than the average customer spends. As a matter of fact, some studies have shown that in some businesses the highest spending customers are not the most effective advocates. This is why we like to teach all retail employees to never label a customer as "just a looker."

2. Make it a company goal to deliver an amazing and delightful experience to every single customer. I love the retailer who told me that her goal is to have every customer who leaves her store feels better than when they came in.

How the experience is delivered varies from retailer to retailer but what doesn't vary is that retailers who deliver a superior experience have identified the steps to delivering the experience. It's usually a combination of activities including a warm welcome, a drink or some other gesture, and may include a surprise that delights the customer.

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The easiest way to get customers to advocate your store is to give them something to tell others about. What happens in your store that your customer will most likely tell a friend or family member about?

3. Capture contact information for all visitors. Retailers who only capture the contact information at the point of sale are losing revenue opportunities and potential advocacy by non-buyers. Give the customer a reason to give you the contact information in the pre-purchase phase and you'll increase the number of post-purchase people.

So let me ask, is building advocacy in your pre or post-purchase stage?

About the author: Doug Fleener is a veteran retailer with over 25 years of hands-on retail experience with world-class retailers including Bose Corporation and The Sharper Image. He has also owned and operated his own specialty stores. In his ten years at Bose, Doug grew the Retail Direct Group from four to 100 stores and was instrumental in developing Bose's unique and engaging retail methods.

Doug is now president and managing partner of Dynamic Experiences Group LLC, a Lexington, MA based retail and customer experience consulting firm dedicated to helping retailers improve their customer experiences that results in higher sales and profits.

Fleener is the author of the book *The Profitable Retailer: 56 surprisingly simple and effective lessons to boost your sales and profits*. He is a frequent speaker around the world on retail issues and his insights has been covered in leading business media including *The New York Times*, *Entrepreneur*, and *Shopping Centers Today*. Along with partner Matt Norcia they write the popular retail blog *Retail Contrarian*.

Doug lives in Lexington, Massachusetts with his wife and two daughters, where in his free time he barbecues while listening to Jimmy Buffet music.

Learn more at www.dynamicexperiencesgroup.com or call Doug at 866-535-6331.