

From Customer to Champion : Mentor Customers for Life



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Three Marketing Quick Guides for Revenue Building

1

From Stranger to Prospect – Break the Ice

Before you can engage in demand-building conversations with prospective buyers, you must first persuade them to identify themselves and give their consent to talk about your solutions. Find that Smart Partner Marketing quick Guide [here](#).

2

From Prospect to Customer – Earn the Right to Sell

Once you've got their interest now its time to start learning more about your prospects by mapping out the data you need and how you're going to get it. Find that Smart Partner Marketing Quick Guide [here](#).

3

From Customer to Champion – Mentor Customers for Life

The customer journey is a loop, not a line. To gain the most from customer relationships and assure their support in gaining the next customers, marketers must focus on life-time value – the job doesn't stop with a lead or a sale. *This Smart Partner Marketing Quick Guide gives you that recipe.*

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU??



Improved close rates: Probability of wins from current customers is higher than from new ones. New customers gained by referral tend to be more loyal.



Positive word-of-mouth: More references. More referrals. More compliments at events, on social media, and over lunch.



Higher ROI: Getting revenue from a current customer costs less than recruiting a new one. Leveraging customers can lower support costs.

Mentor Customers for Life *[at-a-glance]*

Every company's deep wish is for loyal customers who would never dream of doing business with anyone else. With a laser focus on your current customers, you can make that wish come true. Marketing can play a big role in creating loyal advocates. Once customers become champions, you've gained one of the most powerful advantages possible.



Customers demand great experiences.

Your job: **Treat them like VIPs**



Customers expect to be inspired.

Your job: **Make them better for having worked with you**



Customers want access to peers.

Your job: **Be the quintessential host**



Customers are trusted for recommendations.

Your job: **Earn and amplify their advocacy**



Great Ways to Mentor Customers for Life

Listen

Gain insight into what customer want

Connect customer data from across their journey for insights into how to build deeper, more authentic connections and increase life-time value.

Tailor

Increase value with account-based marketing

Account-based marketing (ABM) is the practice of organizing marketing efforts around a single account or opportunity. It differs significantly from general demand-generation campaigns.

Connect

Leverage community programs

People aren't motivated by companies. They are motivated by other people. Bring customers together to share their experiences and enthusiasm.

Cultivate

Invest in the full journey

From welcome to "go live," from smooth sailing to emergency response, from realizing value to sharing success, life-after-purchase is filled with moments for marketing to impress.

Empower

Empower: Develop your champions

Attracting new customers depends just as much on your reputation as it does on your solutions. Share stories and references. Cinch your customers' recommendations.

Measure

Evaluate your progress

Measuring the success of your customer relationships should be a multi-dimensional effort, but not to the point of being burdensome.

Mentor

Go Beyond Selling

Make training a core value of your marketing. Teach customers how to be successful with their business and careers, as well as your solution. Draw on the collective experiences of customers to add value.

Listen: Gain Insight into What Customers Want

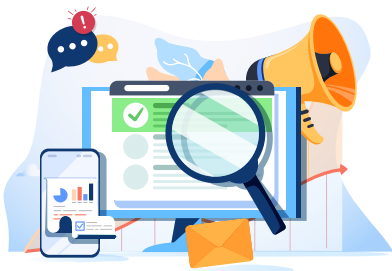
Connect customer data from across their journey for insights into how to build deeper, more authentic connections and increase lifetime value.

Learn about your customers:

Help your prospects learn about you by learning about them. Think holistically about what you need to know and how you'll use that information to optimize interactions.

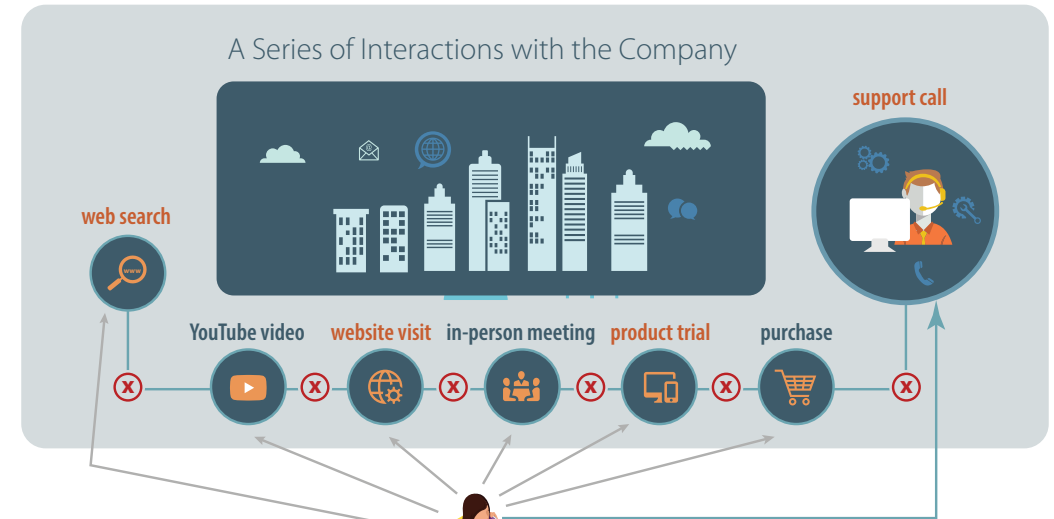
Map your customer data journey:

Identify the data you need at each stage of the customers journey. For example, use data from web visits to trigger an email that is both timely and relevant. Don't let so much time go by that the web visit is forgotten. Mapping the data journey shows you the gaps in your content and your infrastructure integration. Each customer interaction should enhance the next, from marketing to support and back again.



Get feedback:

Weave opportunities for customers to provide feedback into your interactions. Use net promoter score (NPS) surveys, interviews and meeting debriefs, content ratings, social sentiment analytics, viewer comments on your YouTube channel and more. Be creative, but don't be annoying. Use selective sampling to provide directional guidance to improve your performance.



Customers naturally connect the different interactions of their journeys irrespective of the order in which they take place. **If your infrastructure is not able to keep up, data lags and service gaps occur.**

Design your customer experience across all interactions so the customer isn't the only one that knows what's going on in their relationship with you.

Tailor: Increase Value with Account-Based Marketing (ABM)

Account-based marketing (ABM) is the practice of organizing marketing efforts around a single account or opportunity. It differs significantly from general demand-generation campaigns.

It's all about the account:

Turning buyers into customers requires increasingly sensitive data. Plan how you are going to get this data on each and every buyer. Much of the data is obvious: company, location, title, role, etc. Some is harder to get like budget, authority, need, and timing (the ubiquitous BANT factors.) You might also need data unique to your offerings such as: current technology infrastructure, regulatory changes, personnel changes, corporate restructuring, and other events.

ABM Does Two Things:



1. Differentiates between your high- and low-potential accounts.
2. Tiers marketing activities based on account attributes. Primarily revenue potential but also strategic value. A lighthouse account in a new market could become an ABM account.

ABM is definitely for you if:

- You get most of your revenue from a few accounts
- Your offerings are highly customized
- You sell high price point deals that can justify significantly higher acquisition costs



Design Content So That It Retrieves Data

All marketing can be tailored:

Think broadly – microsites, executive events, product roadmap alignment, pricing guarantees, on-site development resources.

Selectively apply:

Only a few targeted accounts will get the white-glove service. The accounts you don't prioritize for special treatment is just as important as the ones you do.

Don't go it alone:

The most successful ABM teams are embedded into account teams and have strong executive support and participation.

Become an account wizard:

Account-based marketers must gain experience with and knowledge about the account so they can prioritize content and other services.

Metrics for ABM:

Revenue, new logo acquisition, account penetration, advocacy, retention and upselling rates.

Voice of the Partner

We continue experimenting with account-based approaches. It's not just the technology, but how do you first identify the right accounts? How do you predict your ideal customer? ...Marketing tactics should be tightly aligned between paid social, business development prospecting, and unique content. How do you orchestrate it, and then scale it?"

– Media Valet

Connect: Leverage Community Programs

People aren't motivated by companies. They are **motivated by other people**. Bring customers together to share their experiences and enthusiasm.

Marketing used to be one-to-many and outbound. But in the mid-2000s, the **most influential conversations** started happening when **customers talked to each other** at scale.

Are you in the room? Guaranteed you will be if you are the host. **You can host:** events (be selective and high quality), customer councils (a must have), executive briefings (a way to engage them in your full brand), or online communities (lots of choices). **Or you can let others host and stand out as an expert influencer.**



What Makes Community Work?

A reason to join:

To get customers to participate, offer service and value in every activity. Be the place to they go to gather – in person or online.

Core participants:

About 10% of your group will be active, but you'll need the 2%-3% of super members who will form the core. Recognize them. Reward them. Give them ways to participate. Consider being a super member of an industry community if you can't form your own.

Shared interests:

The most compelling reason to join a group is communing with people who care about the same things you do.

Reliability:

Groups that seem stable and gatherings that are held regularly build participation. Members feel more secure. They are more likely to stick around and invite others



Voice of the Partner

"Our conference next year is going to be in Munich in the beginning of April, and there we're going to focus very much on customer best practices and inviting current customers to sit and discuss various things they've done."

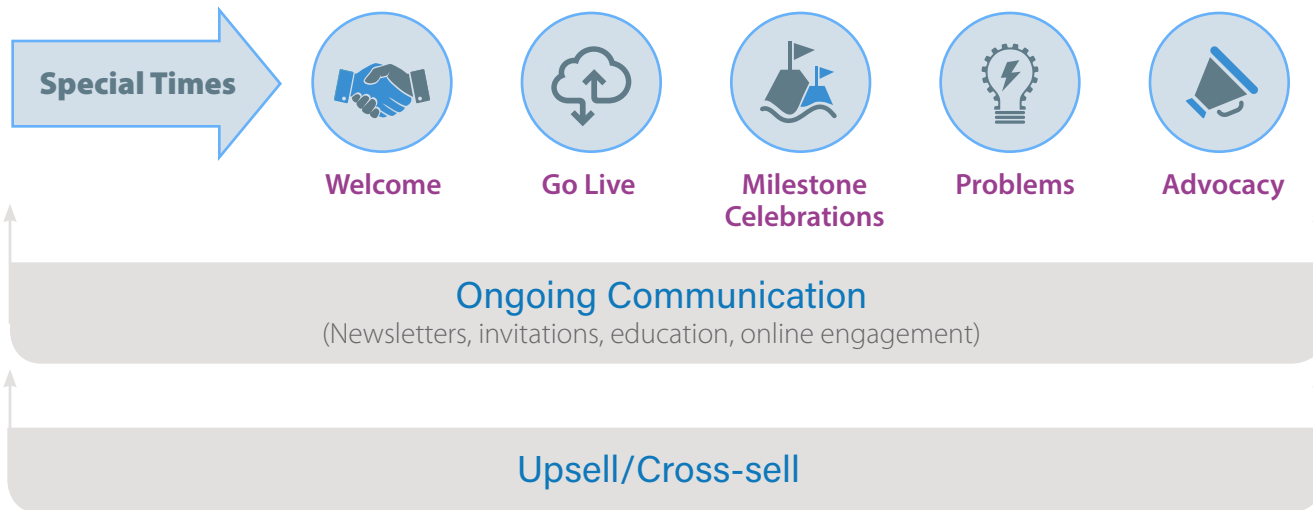
– LS Retail

Cultivate: Invest in the Full Journey

From welcome to “go live,” from smooth sailing to emergency response, from realizing value to sharing success, life-after-purchase is filled with moments for marketing to mark.

Loyalty isn't something that happens once a year at contract renewal time. **It's a mental default resulting from regular, positive reinforcements.** Just thinking about ads, events, and leads is old-school marketing. Ditch that mentality. **Engagement is forever.**

Three times to communicate with customers:



Voice of the Partner

“When we think about customer lifecycle, specifically, it’s, ‘The customer is at this point now, what’s the next logical job for them to do?’ How can we play into that? Or can we partner for that? Or can we introduce them to someone else that can add value?”

– Palmetto Technologies

Empower: Develop Your Champions

Attracting new customers depends just as much on your reputation as it does on your solutions. Share stories and references. Cinch your customers' recommendations.

Customers are the most powerful influencers you have.



Yay! They are willing to advocate:

An IDC survey found that 90% of IT buyers were willing to be a public advocate if they had a very positive experience with a vendor.



Formalize your advocacy program:

Don't leave this critical resource to chance. Put someone in charge. Manage your reference program like your sales pipeline.



Make your customer the hero:

Use your advocacy program to help your customer promote their personal or company brand.

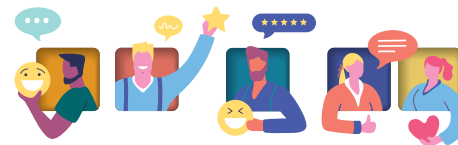


Help them share:

Give them easy access to content they'll be proud to distribute.

Four Levels of Customer References

- 1. The Basic Case Study:** Pre-created, pre-approved, multi-purpose stories. Some long. Some snackable. Some single slides. Some private. Some public. Try video.
- 2. Peer-to-Peer References:** Keep a database of customers willing to talk confidentially to others. Make them your best friends and treat them special. Don't burn them out.
- 3. Expert References:** Analysts and editors expect detailed, no-sales-y experts to answer the hard questions about you. Prep use cases. Identify a few of the most convincing to use in this way.
- 4. Utility Players:** The ideal champion is someone you can showcase at conferences, events, and in all the above situations.



Voice of the Partner

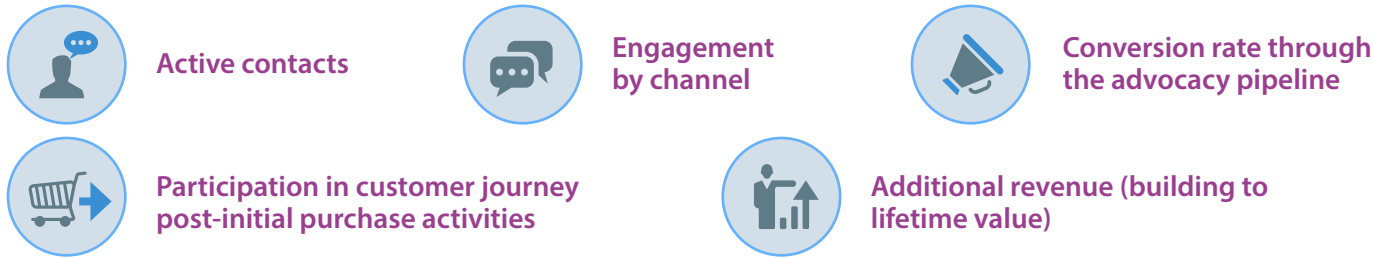
"Our reference program is called PowerPlus. It's sales, marketing, and delivery coming together to understand what the sales process has been, what we actually delivered. Then we figure out how we can continue to engage with them and utilize the success that we've had with them. For example, we might work with delivery folks in order to get information about an account that just finished their first project with us."

– PowerObjects

Measure: Evaluate Your Progress

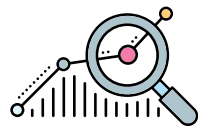
Measuring the success of your customer relationships should be a multi-dimensional effort, but not to the point of being burdensome. Be realistic about what can be measured and how you're going to use the data.

Start with Simple Metrics



Getting More Sophisticated

- **Tune your metrics** to different product lines and audiences
- **Analyze program performance** by cost, conversion, and contribution
- **Profitability matters** – understand the cost of serving customers as well as their revenue so you can focus on those that matter most.



Not Everything that Matters Can be Measured

Some of the most important aspects of customer health can't be measured. Building champions relies on personal relationships built from trust, open communication, and timely and effective service. Be friendly and mark who's most friendly in return.



Voice of the Partner

"We have a customer satisfaction index for projects and for support. We use customer surveys in order to measure this satisfaction and improve ourselves. 70% of customers on new projects respond to these surveys, as do 50% of those using customer support... When certain customers or segments are highly engaged, we share a roadmap of our plans to help them understand what's coming next."

– Sieben

Mentor: Go Beyond Selling

Make training a core value of your marketing. Teach customers how to be successful with their businesses and careers, as well as your solution. Draw on the collective customers experiences to add value.

Invest in their individual success:



Go beyond the scope of your products and services. Help individual users master the skills they need to move up in their careers.

Invest in their business success:

Help business owners work smarter. If you serve a market niche like dentist offices, or independent tax accountants, or other specialty businesses, learn everything you can about best practices that make those businesses most successful and share your knowledge.



Make training a core value of your customer relationships:



Training and post-purchase marketing can go hand-in-hand. What about pre-purchase training? What can you teach for free to demonstrate value beyond your products and services?

Create snackable expertise :

By giving away some of your expertise in bite sized pieces of content, you'll learn a lot about how deeply each customer wants to engage, you'll gain insight into their resources and skill levels, and get the inside scoop on their plans.



Voice of the Partner

"Training changes the tenor of marketing. Rather than just trying to sell people stuff, we're helping people increase their capabilities. We see training and certification as a component of marketing. It's a great way for us to market the product and help individuals develop their skills in an easily accessible, free, self-paced model that tracks their progress."

As they're taking on new projects, our great curriculum helps them tackle something like migration to Azure. In parallel, we learn about these customers and about what they are doing. This helps hone our marketing messages."

– Chef

Message from the Sponsor

For more Microsoft Resources please visit the following:

All marketing resources for Microsoft partners: aka.ms/smartmarketing

IDC Microsoft Next- Gen Partner Marketing eBook : aka.ms/smartmarketingebook

