

Activating Your Advocates

6 Critical Success Factors

What is the difference between a fan and an advocate?

A **fan** is someone who likes your company, products, and services. A fan will rate you highly on surveys and might even connect with you on social networks. An advocate will take action. An **advocate** will tell their friends, publish testimonials, and give you meaningful feedback. The actions taken by an advocate generate value that drops directly to the bottom line.

The real question is “how can you turn your fans into incredibly valuable advocates?”

Every successful neighborhood merchant will tell you that the only reliable way to get a referral is to ask. Somewhere along the line, with the success of mass media, mega-stores, and e-commerce most companies forgot this lesson and they don't ask. This is a shame because the recent explosion of social and mobile technologies has amplified the reach of every consumer who uses them. A typical consumer is now connected to 150 friends on Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Twitter and/or whatever comes next. Their cell phone plan is unlimited allowing them to talk, text and be connected to social networks at all times.



Now is the time to start asking again.

The following six critical success factors will ensure a successful advocate activation strategy.

1. Promote The Advocacy Opportunity

Asking for advocacy should be built into your process. Take a look at every way in which new customers interact with you, and ask them to advocate in ways appropriate to those interactions. Do customers buy online? Ask them to share their purchase with friends during checkout. Do you send a weekly or monthly newsletter by email? Add a link to the program in the header or sidebar. Do you have a little real estate to give up on your homepage, or any other high-traffic page on your site? Might be a good idea to add a nice, graphic link there as well. Do you send communication to your customers by mail? Include a blurb about a referral offer on the envelope or mail-piece itself with a link to learn more details. Do you have face-to-face interactions with customers, or a call center? Train your employees on how and when to ask for referrals.

Advocacy should be part of your communication strategy. A dedicated campaign should announce a new program. The announcement could be as simple as an email to the contacts in your CRM that are highly likely to become advocates. Be sure to include a strong call to action that directs the recipient to a location where they can register and start sharing the offer with friends and family (on a program website, offline registration card, or mobile app).

Within 3 week of using **Amlifinity**, a leading cable service provider **Registered Over 2,000 Employee Advocates AND Generated Over 6,500 Referrals**

Your communication strategy should include a steady promotion of the program to likely advocates through all channels available. Every company has multiple opportunities; from invoices and bill-inserts, to the back of your business cards, you should never miss a chance to let a customer know about your advocacy program. Advocacy is also a perfect engagement opportunity for your business' Facebook Fan Page or Twitter account.

2. Give Advocates Tools To Make Advocacy Easy On and Offline

How do your advocates talk to their friends? To ensure advocates can take action whenever an opportunity arises, you must empower them with the tools that make referring convenient and easy.

Online: Let advocates take action through email and social media. This means with just a few clicks, advocates can upload their contacts from any major email provider, or post on any social network using the templates and message ideas you provide. All messages come directly from the advocates to their personal and professional networks. These online referral methods spread brand awareness virally generating high open rates, click thru rates and impressions.

Offline: Online isn't the only place where the opportunity advocate arises. Give advocates the option to take action offline as well. Advocates can keep referral cards in their wallet, hand out brochures at the front desk of their business, or send an offer through SMS text.

Our client, a major skincare provider, used the Amplifinity platform and brought in **11,000 new customers** who **spent 2x times more** than clients acquired through other marketing efforts.

3. Allow Prospects To Accept The Referred Offer Easily and Through Multiple Channels, On and Offline

Anyone in sales can tell you "Timing is everything!". So when your advocates tell their networks about you, its critical that you make it easy for prospects to accept the referral, receive their offer and give credit to the advocate who sent them.

A few words of wisdom:

Less is more.

When you make your prospects jump through hoops, for example: Making them provide the advocates' account number or fill out too many fields, there's a good chance they will be too frustrated to proceed.

Even when a prospect finds out about you online, it doesn't mean that's where they will buy.

Someone may hear about you on facebook, but want to come into a store to buy. Or hear about your company at a BBQ but want to buy online. Give prospects track-able, but convenient ways to accept an offer from their friends.

4. Offer Appropriate Incentives

Although an incentive won't convert a detractor into an evangelist . . . It can motivate a fan to take action!

People advocate for many reasons including a sense of belonging, altruism, self-promotion, or the desire to give back to a company that has provided them with a great experience. However, strategic use of incentives is not only appropriate, but also essential to a successful advocate-activation strategy. The right incentive is often the nudge that a potential advocate needs to take action.

There are many forms of incentives. . . anything that captures your advocates' attention and creates a sense of urgency to reach out to friends. You are asking someone to take time out of their busy day - why not show your appreciation?

Here are a few examples of how you can reward your advocates for successful referrals:

- **Cash Programs**
(Example: \$25 for you and a friend when they accept your referral!)
- **Promotional Programs**
- **Exclusive Products and Advanced Releases**
- **Advocate Loyalty Programs**
- **Sweepstakes Entry**
- **Charity Donations**
- **Points Programs**



Some Things To Consider When Offering Rewards:

1. What do you know about your target advocates?

For example: Are your fans thrifty shoppers who love a deal? Discounted products or cash rewards might be perfect. However, if your fans tend to be wealthy, you probably want to stick to exclusive offers.

2. Offer rewards to the prospects, too.

Advocates love to pass on deals to their friends. For example: If you're offering an advocate \$25 for making the referral, give the prospect \$25 for becoming a new customer.

3. Are there laws that restrict referral rewards in your industry

In the financial services and education industries there are restrictions on the types of referral incentives you can offer! Make sure to get all the facts before proceeding.

4. Is your reward enticing enough?

If your margins are low- maybe you can't offer your advocates cash for every successful referral. Instead of offering \$5 as a reward, why not offer \$50 for 10 successful referrals? Or 1 entry into a sweepstakes for every successful referral?

5. Make it a game

Gamification techniques are effective motivators for the competitor in all of us. Leaderboards, levels, and badges can be fun and effective incentives.

6. Testing

Use A/B and campaign testing to find the best rewards for your program. The goal is to find rewards that are enticing to your advocates but require the least amount of time, money, and resources to distribute. Try variations on incentive types and value.

5. Nurture Your Advocates

Once someone advocates for you, it's critical to keep him/her engaged. The simplest form of nurturing is acknowledgement. Every advocacy program should include automatic communication that ensures that your advocates are recognized, thanked for their efforts and kept in the loop.

Here are some of the ways you can nurture your advocates so they continue to spread the word about you:

1. Provide status updates throughout the process*:

Let your advocates know when their friends show interest in an offer and when they actually make a purchase (with their friend's permission). This will let your advocates know that their actions did not fall on deaf ears and that they're close to a reward.

You should also send your advocates updates on their eligibility for a reward. Let's say they made a referral and their friend made a purchase but a reward won't be sent until their friend remains a customer for 30 days. It's crucial to set expectations for the advocate so they know what's happening and when to expect the reward. This will keep them excited instead of frustrated.

**One way to provide consistent updates is to give advocates access to an online portal that allows them to make offers, review offer statuses and view reward statuses. This dashboard not only provides a transparent and track-able way for advocates to participate and communicate with the program but reduces customer service requests and increases positive user experience.*

2. Send your advocates targeted opportunities

The more you know about your advocates, the more you can target your communication with them. Do you have an advocate that consistently refers the same product? Now that you know they like to talk about this specific product to their networks, why not keep them interested with insider information about that product, exclusive previews or discounts?

3. Reward advocates for advocating often

Keeping referral rewards fresh and exciting will keep your advocates eager to check in and spread the word to their friends. Tiered rewards, bonus prizes, and special campaign promotions are all good ways to bring them back for more.

4. Provide strong customer service

Make sure someone is always there when advocates need help sending your company message, checking on a referral status, or asking about their reward. Advocates want to be treated like friends of the company- its up to you to make sure they always feel appreciated.

6. Manage Your Optimize Your Relationship With Advocates

Dotting i's and crossing t's is essential to a sustainable advocacy program. Strong management systems can be the difference between an expensive, chaotic Word of Mouth campaigns and an efficient, effective and consistent enterprise-wide strategy. You should know who is advocating, how often they spread the word, the programs that generate the most activity, the number of referrals that turn into leads and the leads that turn into sales.

Here are some other key metrics and functionality that you should consider as part of your advocacy program:

- Tracking of core advocate analytics like registered advocates, referrals sent per advocate, and conversions
- Web analytics including unique visits, bounce rate, page views
- Ability to run standard and custom reports, tracking daily/weekly/monthly activity

Advocates vary by brand, product and service. Within every advocate pool there are people who are highly active in every form of advocacy and some who respond to only one type of request. Some have large networks of diverse friends and others have a very specific group that they are effective in recruiting. Tracking the data generated by your advocates is essential to optimizing your relationship. Over time you gain the opportunity to segment your advocate population and better target offers. With the right management tools you can deliver the right opportunity to the right advocate at the right time and maximize their impact on your business.

40%

of all referrals turn into leads

ONE AMPLIFINITY CLIENT SAW

50%

of leads generated, convert into sales

The founding Amplifinity management team consists of a group of tried, tested, and proven enterprise application software leaders. Collectively, this team has built and managed some of the most successful companies in the information technology industry. They have brought to market numerous successful enterprise technology products, served thousands of satisfied corporate customers across multiple continents, and managed growing, prosperous, and healthy companies. Leading experts and companies of all sizes are discovering the importance of their advocate network as a powerful sales and marketing channel and are turning to Amplifinity to grow and manage this network.

Contact Us

If you would like more information, don't hesitate to contact us for a 15-minute discussion with you and your team. You can reach us at: 734.585.5684 or sales@amplifinity.com