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MARKETING SERIES

Brand Ambassador Program

Why is this important?

A brand ambassador program is a strategy that lets you formally recruit your biggest advocates – people who love your brand and are already enthusiastically engaged with it – to be your long-term promotional partner. Usually, it involves mobilizing these evangelical ambassadors to accomplish a specific goal, such as increasing sales, driving conversions, improving social selling/engagement or building brand awareness and trust.

Brand ambassadors work closely with your business for long periods of time. In many ways, they serve as the face of your brand and an extension of your mission, vision and values – as well as the eyes and ears of the marketplace, providing you valuable insights on your product.

Effective brand ambassadors spread positive messages about your business, influence product sales, provide customer service and act as authentic voices and spokespeople for your brand. Importantly, brand ambassadors humanize your brand. Today more so than ever, consumers prefer to purchase products from people with whom they have a trusted relationship rather than faceless companies. A brand ambassadors' shared experience about a product or service is a source of information that consumers trust most.



Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund

The Benefits of a Brand Ambassador Program

A brand ambassador program formalizes all the details and expectations of the relationship, including any requirements, guidelines and incentives that have been agreed on. The benefits of a structured brand ambassador program include:

1. Brand Ambassadors are trusted.

According to a Nielsen report, [92%](#) of consumers believe recommendations from family and friends far more than direct messaging from a brand. Product recommendations that come after a personal experience, such as brand ambassador's first-hand testimonial, are one of the most trusted sources of information. Also 75% of consumers decide what to buy based on social media posts yet 96% of the people who discuss brands online do not follow that brand's online presence. If your business is tapping into a new target market, the right brand ambassador can help you do so authentically and in the quickest way possible.

As importantly, besides driving more visibility, brand awareness, and sales, brand ambassadorship can

be a very efficient way of improving your business' employer brand and, therefore, driving more high-quality candidates for your open positions.

2. Brand ambassadors promote your products authentically, without the formalized 'sales' pitch approach.

Brand ambassadors have purchased – and used – your products repeatedly. Therefore they offer their own perspective and words when sharing your brand with others. This genuine affinity translates to promotions that are infinitely more effective than press releases or sales pitches.

In fact, you may notice brand ambassadors will even promote products without prompting (because they honestly love your brand). It's this real, powerful testimony that leads to more sales conversions.

3. Brand ambassadors who are active on social media create and share content for you.

Shining the spotlight on your product is what a brand ambassador lives to do. As long as you furnish ambassadors with your latest products and information, you can sit back as they roll out fresh content in their

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own distinct style. Their personal, unique content is posted and shared widely throughout their network expanding your reach in ways difficult to replicate. You can also repost the content on your own site and channels, demonstrating the diverse audiences you serve with your product.

4. Brand ambassadors influence - and even expand - your market.

Choose an ambassador with good communication skills and who has authority with an audience that is also your brand's target market. Even if a brand ambassador has a smaller audience, as long as they provide regular engagement, you

have the makings of a word-of-mouth campaign and the opportunity to expand your product reach into a community you may not be able to access on your own.

5. Brand ambassadors provide valuable user feedback, market intelligence and consumer insights.

Brand ambassadors are already fans of your product – which makes them great testers and listeners. They'll share what they love, as well as what they, and those in their circle, think you can improve on. This honest feedback helps iron out any rough spots before launching a new product to the general public as well as helps to hone your launch

strategy and product-to-market plan. Brand ambassadors can also help protect your reputation in the case of negative comments, defaming news or opinions about your company.

6. A brand ambassador program is cost-effective.

Whether you reward your ambassadors with free products or discounts, brand ambassador programs are still one of the most cost-effective marketing strategies. Payments should be based on results, meaning you only incur costs after you make a new sale or meet another goal.



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Signs your business is ready to start a brand ambassador program:

1 You are confident in your products and services. The best brand ambassadors already use your products and are eager to share them with their audience. Before you jumpstart your word of mouth with a formal brand ambassador program, make sure you iron out all the kinks and provide the highest quality possible – and that you have the capacity to communicate frequently with your brand ambassadors.

2 You have a happy customer base (and some are already sharing your product!). No matter how large your market, having happy and loyal customers shows you're doing something right – and others need to hear about it. In fact, many ambassadors start out as loyal customers who have shared your product with others, without you even asking them to. (Hint: These are the customers who you should look at when creating your brand ambassador program.)

3 You have the resources to create strong marketing campaigns. If you run a brand ambassador program, that isn't a replacement for your entire marketing strategy. While ambassador programs are a great source of content and promotions, brand ambassadors still need something to share. It's important to communicate frequently, maintain a lineup of engaging campaigns, and work with your ambassadors to maximize exposure.

4 You're active on social media. These days, the majority of marketing happens online and through social media – this is the same for brand ambassador programs. When an ambassador shares content about your brand, you want to be present on the platform so they can direct viewers to your business account. It's also a good opportunity to directly engage and answer any audience questions.

Furthermore, brand ambassador programs are highly recommended if your business also meets the following:

✔ You're in a highly competitive industry. Even with the best products, it can be difficult to stand out in a highly competitive industry where it's difficult to differentiate yourself. This is where affiliating yourself with an expert or notable personality can give you that edge you need. Brand ambassadors can help make your product stand out from competitors with their unique perspective and content.

✔ You're targeting a niche audience. While new brand ambassador programs are popping up across all sectors, it can be especially effective if you're targeting a niche audience (i.e., athlete, health-conscious, dietary restriction, senior, etc.) In niches, there are usually a few prominent individuals who stand out and audiences follow. These are the individuals to invite to your brand ambassador program.

✔ You have the capacity to manage your ambassadors. With so many benefits, ambassadors are a great addition to any marketing strategy. However, managing a brand ambassador program does require a bit of extra work depending on the type of brand ambassador program you establish.

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Types of Brand Ambassador Programs

Requirement-driven brand ambassador programs

This is what many marketers consider to be an official brand ambassador program. In this type of program, an ambassador must complete certain requirements on behalf of a brand within a specific time frame – say, 10 social media posts a month, or five brand mentions on their personal blog.

This type of ambassador program is very versatile and gives you direct control over your budget.

Plus, brands can use requirement-driven promotions across any industry, and can easily refresh the requirements to fit their overall marketing strategy.

Affiliate brand ambassador programs

Building on the marketing efforts of brand ambassadors, this type of affiliate program aims to ultimately generate purchases. Affiliate brand ambassadors promote products and services on their own platforms (usually social media and personal websites), including a unique affiliate link that attributes the sale back to them.

In exchange, they receive a commission for every completed purchase.

It's common to offer tiered incentives – the more sales an affiliate brand ambassador drives, the higher their commission percentage.

Informal brand ambassador programs

Informal brand ambassador programs are basically an open invite to anyone who loves your brand. With this type of program, there are no signed agreements or requirements. Often, there are no rewards, although some brands offer special incentives to their top-performing ambassadors.

An informal brand ambassador program is great for generating word of mouth and referrals. But without any guidance or structure, it can be hard to track and optimize where your new customers are coming from.



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Employee ambassador programs

Employees already know what sets your business apart, are familiar with your products or services, and are committed to your company values. Why not use this to your advantage and recruit employees as your ambassadors?

If you choose to start an employee ambassador program, give your employees the freedom to use their own voice and methods to promote you (as you should with any other ambassador) with some training, guidance and 'best practices' to ensure the skills necessary to do relationship-building in their brand ambassador role. This will ensure that they are authentic in their promotion.

Employees who are proud to work for your company can spread the word about your organization's core company values and their own employee experience. As a significant percentage of employers say that they use social

and professional networks to recruit talent, leveraging your own employees to build interest and pools of the best talent available can be a highly productive recruitment strategy.

Customer ambassador programs

Customer ambassador programs tap into your customers' genuine love for your brand, and equip them to authentically promote it to people who trust them.

These programs can be formal (where your company handpicks ambassadors and trains them to promote you in the long term) or informal (where any customer can join and share your brand with others). This informal version is a more typical customer referral program that rewards your current customers for converting friends and family to your brand. Recruitment can range from targeted invitations to holding a contest to find the next brand ambassador.

Setting up a brand ambassador program in six, easy steps:

- 1. Set goals for your brand ambassador program**
- 2. Define your ideal brand ambassador**
- 3. Determine program criteria and guidelines**
- 4. Find and reach out to potential brand ambassadors**
- 5. Reward and recognize your brand ambassadors**
- 6. Track the progress of your brand ambassador program**

Business Sense is a no-fluff source of information that gets right to the heart of what small business owners need: essential tools and informational resources to help their businesses grow. Written by our team of business coaches, this series shares their decades of experience in areas such as financials, operations, sales and marketing, human resources, leadership, and governance. Business Sense is designed to provide entrepreneurs and small business owners in various sectors, including agriculture, forestry, waste management, renewable energy, and environmental technology, with recommendations and practical advice to help their businesses not only survive but thrive.

Our business management coaching and Business Sense Resource Guide are designed to accelerate the growth of the enterprises we work with and expand the leadership capacity of the entrepreneurs who own and manage these businesses.

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The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund provides tailored business management coaching, entrepreneurial support, and training to position Vermont-based entrepreneurs and small business owners in our designated market sectors for growth and long-term success. We partner with state government, private sector businesses and nonprofit organizations to build a thriving economic, social and ecological future for Vermont. Learn more at [VSJF.org](https://www.vsjf.org)



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