



AFTERLIKE MARKETING™

Guide to Advocate Retention

8 MUST-FOLLOW RULES FOR RETAINING
LOYAL ADVOCATES





Getting good fans to engage is important.

...getting them to come back is crucial. A community lives and dies by the activity of the top 5% of members, a thin layer of Superfans that serve as the ozone layer for the rest of your brand ecosystem.

The rest of the community depends on them to create 80% of the content, curation, and activity that feeds the consumptive majority. Advocate retention is a great, predictive measure of a brand community's success, and many brands are examining their strategies to drive retention and frequent reengagement.



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IS A GREAT, PREDICTIVE MEASURE OF A BRAND COMMUNITY'S SUCCESS, AND MANY BRANDS ARE EXAMINING THEIR STRATEGIES TO

DRIVE RETENTION AND FREQUENT REENGAGEMENT. HOWEVER, MOST BRANDS HOVER AROUND ONLY

7% RETENTION WEEK-TO-WEEK."



The single best thing a brand can do is NUDGE

PICK YOUR SPOTS
mechanically pasting the same canned response to 100 comments in a row feels like being the last one off the plane and having the flight attendant chirp “bye bye now” at you for the 200th time.

...or (directly acknowledge) an influential fan when they comment. This can be a simple “like,” a personalized reply, or a more customized action. Our research of more than 2,000 fans across a dozen top brand pages shows that when a brand replies to a fan’s comment, they’re a whopping 425% more likely to make positive reengagements just within the next 10-day window. This single act, done well and consistently, plants the seeds for a strong community with great advocate retention. While your posts have to serve a wider audience, the comments are where you can really make the fan relationship personal, and show identity.



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Foster Fan-to-Fan Dialogue

While nudging and authentically engaging your true fans can go a long way to building a vibrant community, don't assume you always have to be in the driver's seat. When you see positive fan-to-fan interactions taking place, support the dialogue without dominating the conversation.

Then **take the time to acknowledge and thank your budding ambassadors** for their good actions.



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Benchmark, Track & Measure

As the old adage goes, **you can't manage what you cannot measure** – track your own advocate engagement progress, benchmark against the best, but know that benchmarks vary from industry to industry. Based on our benchmarking of advocate retention data across 40 large brands from July-Sep 2013, we found that most brands with large Facebook communities (250,000+fans) bring back about 7% of their Superfans week over week on average.

Study leading brands, but look to your closest few competitors to benchmark. When competing brands have a wide disparity in week-over-week advocate retention, **the winning brand consistently outperforms the losing brand in performance measures like % reach and engagement.**



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Surprise & Delight, Don't Incentivize

Consider this – since most brands ignore their fans and approach fan engagement with blanket offers and discount rewards, **surprising your Superfans with a direct acknowledgement can go a lot further than you'd expect.** Swap your shotgun discount approach with genuine, direct and authentic tokens of fan appreciation. Show appreciation to your true fans for the brand love they've already shown, and watch the power of reciprocity outperform your best discount campaign.

Get them to connect you to their "real world." Getting a true brand fan to share from your brand page with their friends is one of the strongest indicators of fan loyalty – a path to subsequent brand engagement and long-term retention. This is particularly true if that share results in a positive response or like from a friend of fan, both in terms of the future engagement of that fan, and their friend.



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■) The 25/75 Rule ■) Meets the 50:50 Strategy

Less than 25% of all content you post should be explicitly about your product. After all, your fans are your community, not a faceless audience. Reserve the majority - 75% of your posts, to content related to the values of the brand and the lifestyle, passions or pains of your fans. If your brand is an airline - do like Southwest - talk about dream vacations, how to prepare for that big business meeting, celebrate customers who met their future spouses at airports, and pepper in with occasional references to promotions or new flight routes. But **don't just post - ask**. This is where the 50:50 comes in: half of all your posts should be open-ended questions intended to elicit comments, interactions, feedback, and shares. Keep track of what you post, and measure and refine how well your intended conversation generates fan responses.



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Champion User-Generated Content

Let people talk about the brand by talking about themselves. Brand-relevant stories told by real people with real passion are far more powerful than attempts to incite fan-regurgitated brand messaging. Within every post, have a clear, compelling prompt to participate. Posts asking someone to guess a number, or location of a picture don't work. Even if you're generating some responses, nine comments in a row that read "Phoenix" or "42" gets boring quickly.

Ask something you're personally interested in hearing responses to, not just as a brand manager, but as a fellow fan. Engage actively in the comment thread, liking and replying to top content. Additionally, finding a few great fan narratives to reference or feature, or creative ways to implement them into other brand communications does extraordinarily well. Levis using fan-submitted photos to help field a catalogue is a great example.



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Don't Go To The Lowest Common Denominator

The best way to produce a stagnant community is to try to please absolutely everyone all of the time. The lowest common denominator out of a community of a million fans is extraordinarily low, and a content strategy that is petrified at the possibility of making a joke that goes over anyone's head is going to be extraordinarily boring. **Respect your fans, as reasonably intelligent and as real people.** If you'd feel ridiculous or cheesy reading your headline out loud at a cocktail party, don't post it.



“FOCUS ON GETTING THEM ENGAGED AND **GETTING THEM BACK.**”

Communities are inherently about people, something so obvious yet so often forgotten. Aggregate data is a useful piece of the puzzle, but viewed in isolation loses your top 5% amongst the noise. Isolating actions from individuals prevents a brand's ability to identify causation or patterns of behavior over time. There's an adage that all politics is local, and similarly, all engagement is personal. **The most important lever any community manager has is their top 5%**, focus on getting them engaged and getting them back, and the rest of your community and metrics will follow.



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LET'S TALK

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