



FORRESTER LEADERSHIP BOARDS
The CMO Group

Report Brief: Transforming Employees Into Brand Advocates

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RESEARCH PREMISE AND BACKGROUND

Marketers spend significant dollars on a variety of tactics to reach and communicate with customers and promote their brands. However, if employees aren't aligned with and rallied around that brand, then delivery of that brand promise is broken, leading to suboptimal customer experiences, missed opportunities for true brand differentiation, and customer defection. Organizations often underutilize their employees as a channel to connect and build relationships with customers, leading to fewer endorsements of the brand and the organization to customers and potential future customers.

Employees who actively "live the brand" create significant benefits for both the customer and the organization. Customers of organizations with employee brand advocates enjoy better customer service, greater anticipation of and ability to have their needs met, and more attentiveness to their voice and feedback. The organization also enjoys the benefits of word-of-mouth marketing, greater profitability and financial results, and a more differentiated brand.

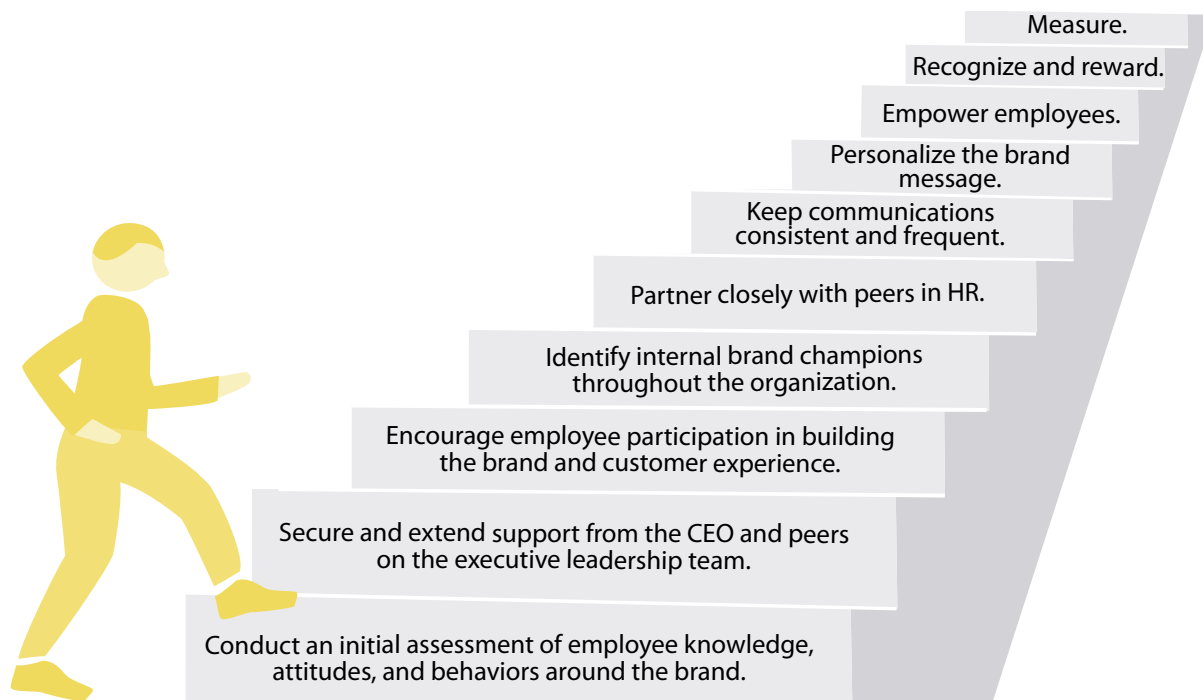
In the report, "Transforming Employees Into Brand Advocates," we examine best practices for CMOs to actively engage employees with the brand to ensure the delivery of the brand promise through all aspects of the customer experience. We interviewed a number of experts from consulting firms and academia as well as marketing executives from organizations, including Vodafone, The Ritz-Carlton, Singapore Airlines, KeyCorp, and Mayo Clinic. The full report includes eleven case study examples, two distinct diagnostic and assessment tools, and recommendations for overcoming common challenges.

This overview provides a glimpse into the content of the full report with some of the highlights of our key takeaways, frameworks, and case studies.

PROCESS FOR INSPIRING EMPLOYEE BRAND ADVOCACY

Employee brand advocacy does not happen overnight, nor does it happen with a few stickers, T-shirts, or emails. Senior marketing executives need to be prepared to lead and partner with peers through a dynamic process that builds employee knowledge, shapes their attitudes, and enables their behaviors for the delivery of the brand promise.

Figure 1 Employee Brand Advocacy Process



STAGES OF EMPLOYEE BRAND ADVOCACY

Not all employees are alike in terms of their progress toward brand advocacy. To help senior marketing executives assess their various employee segments, we have developed a four-stage framework of brand advocacy. Using the assessment tool in the full report, senior marketers can categorize employees into one of four buckets based on their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.

Figure 2 Stages Of Employee Brand Advocacy


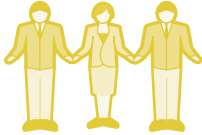



| Stage of brand advocacy | Knowledge | Attitude | Behavior |
|-------------------------|---|---|--|
| Brand advocates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share knowledge of brand internally and externally • Participate in driving direction of brand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel empowered • Excited to shape future of brand • Believe in differentiation of brand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active word-of-mouth marketing • Live brand at work and in community • Model behavior for others |
| Brand believers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand brand relevance to specific job • Understand customer needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passionate about brand • Believe in brand • Believe that the customer is always right | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in word-of-mouth marketing • Try to live the brand but feel constrained |
| Brand learners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in training • Know brand messages, values, and stories | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy when things are going well in the organization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet basic customer needs • Live job to the letter of law description |
| Brand resisters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of understanding of brand • Misconceptions of brand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indifference • Apathy • Unhappy at job | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent behavior • Put self-interests first |

BEST PRACTICES

In our research, we uncovered five key categories of best practices:

- **Share.** Marketers cannot keep the black box closed to the rest of the organization in terms of marketing and brand activities. Instead, marketing executives need to share plans, campaigns, brand insights, and customer information across the organization.
- **Involve.** To feel a sense of pride about and ownership of the brand promise and customer experience, employees need to feel that their voice is heard and that they play an active role in driving the direction of the overall brand.
- **Personalize.** Senior marketers need to create personal connections between each employee and the brand to ensure that each employee understands what the brand promise means for his or her specific roles and daily activities.
- **Enable.** Senior marketers need to enable the delivery of the brand promise through the creation of guidelines for behavior, sufficient customer experience training, participation in hiring decisions for customer-facing employees, and empowerment of employees to do what is right for the customer.
- **Reinforce.** To build off of and continue the brand-aligned behavior of employees, marketers need to reinforce behavior with small and large-scale recognition practices.

Figure 3 Best Practices For Transforming Employees Into Brand Advocates

|  Share |  Involve |  Personalize |  Enable |  Reinforce |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target communications for internal stakeholder groups • Lead by example to get employees onboard | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain alignment through employee participation • Treat employees as partners in maintaining the brand mission • Use fun to generate brand excitement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize each employee's impact on the brand • Allow for personal interpretation of the brand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide tools for customer-centric behavior • Invest in training and brand-inspiring activities • Empower employees to put the customer first | <p>Recognize and reinforce brand-advocating behavior</p> |

SAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS

The case studies in the full report give detailed examples of how senior marketers have effectively involved employees for increased buy-in, passion, and overall support for brand initiatives and delivery of the brand promise.

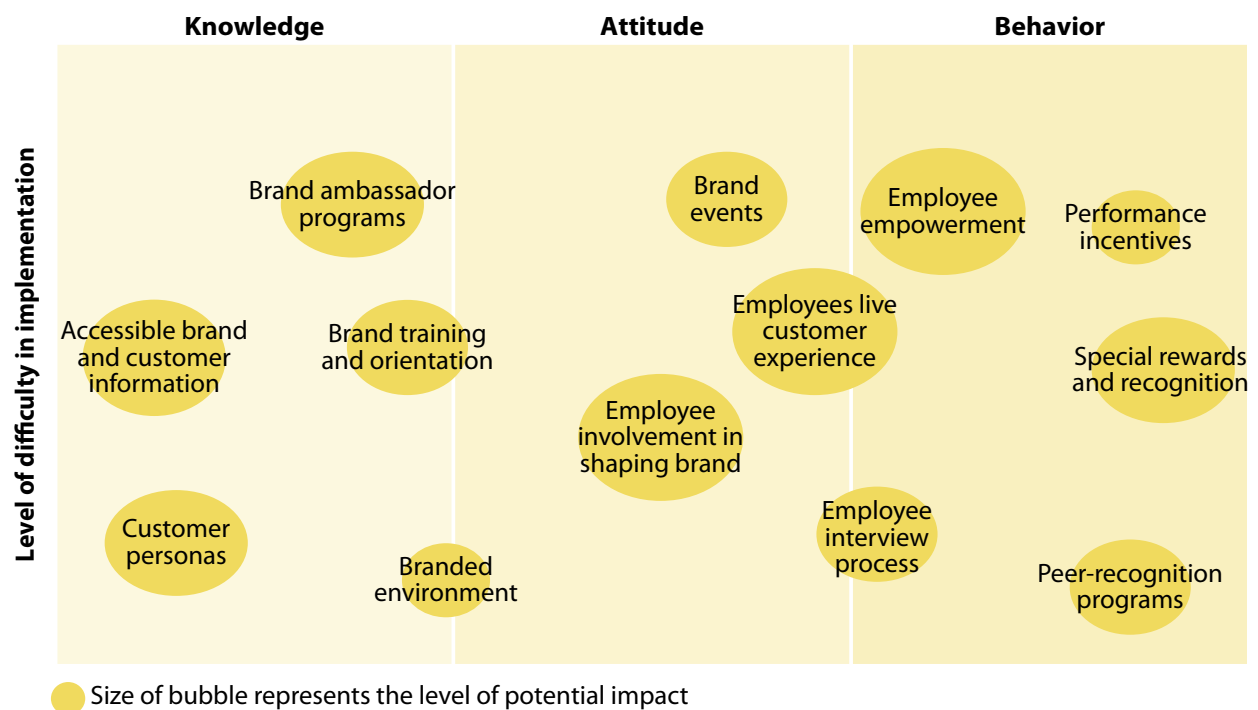
Examples from the case studies include:

- **A financial services company.** Involve senior management in every step of the brand-refresh process and require active participation with tools such as a brand identity pyramid and competitive positioning charts.
- **A hotel chain.** Seek employee feedback in the shaping of core company values and show them the “before feedback” and “after feedback” results to highlight the impact of their ideas.
- **An airline.** Participate in road shows on a regular basis to generate excitement at the local level and allocate time to listen to the frustrations and ideas of the frontline employees.
- **A restaurant chain.** Create a rigorous process for employees to provide suggestions or report activities that are inconsistent with the brand — and respond within 48 hours.
- **An automotive company.** Put employees in the shoes of the customer by giving them a new car model for a weekend; train employees on the car’s features and the brand so that they can effectively talk about the car.
- **A telecom company.** Make all executive committee members accountable for the relationship with two key customer accounts, ensuring that they play an active role in delivering on the brand promise.

TOOLS AVAILABLE TO MARKETERS

To inspire and enable employee brand advocacy, marketers have a variety of tools available to them. These tools range from those geared toward building employee knowledge about the brand or customer (such as accessible information) to those geared toward shaping employee attitudes (such as employee involvement in shaping the brand) to those geared toward enabling brand-aligned behavior (such as employee empowerment and special rewards). Depending on the stage of brand advocacy that employees are at, senior marketers can select the appropriate tools for those employees to accomplish their goals.

Figure 4 Tools For Building Employee Brand Advocacy



MORE INFORMATION

The full report on “Transforming Employees Into Brand Advocates” was prepared for The CMO Group and is available only to the members of the Forrester Leadership Boards. The CMO Group is an executive-level peer knowledge community for marketing leadership. The program strives to help marketers become more effective through a combination of member-driven best practice development and Forrester’s analyses of how the marketing landscape is changing and evolving and what marketers need to do to adapt and succeed today and in the future.

As part of The CMO Group program, Forrester provides exclusive research on best practices covering topics the members select as most important and relevant. Future 2007 reports include “Partnering For Success: The CIO-CMO Relationship” and “Best Practices In Customer Segment Marketing.” CMO Group members also receive access to a broad array of Forrester reports on various topics, including marketing, strategy, the consumer and business landscapes, and technology, as well as structured, facilitated interactions with their peers and Forrester’s analyst community.

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