



How You Can Create Raving Fans?

Are you turning your clients into raving fans? If you are a “geezer rock” fan like me or a fan of the process of branding, you will love *Brands That Rock*. Roger Blackell’s “bands and brands book” uses the model of classic rockers like The Rolling Stones and countless others to show how longstanding businesses have evolved customers into loyal clients and then into fans. Here is a table from the book that portrays the evolution of customer to fans:

Customer	Friends/ repeat clients	Fans
Price-driven	Value-driven	Experience- driven
Want you to sell them products	Want products & good service	Want personalized advice & solutions
Need a reason to buy from you	Prefer to buy from you	Are devoted to you and yours to lose
Are surprised by good service	Have history of good experiences with you	Automatically assume you will delight them
Drop you if they are disappointed	Tell you if they are disappointed & give you a respond	Tell you if they are disappointed, want you anxious to forgive & forget
Are indifferent to your company	Feel a connection with you rationally or emo	Actively invest their relationship with you-attention, money
Don't think or talk about your firm	Recommend your firm casually	Evangelize about your firm

Brands That Rock shows how rock stars and businesses of all kinds are able to connect with people at an emotional level to help them keep their fans forever. No wonder I was willing to tolerate 109 degrees temperatures this summer and politics I do not buy into at the *Freedom of Speech* concert of Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young. However, I forgave Neil Young again, as I have done so many times before. I continue to be hooked on the timeless energy, relentless work ethic, individualist style and passion that Neil Young conveys. I will keep on buying all his albums because of a lifetime of emotional connections that he has stirred in me. Memories of my best life’s greatest moments are associated with his tunes. So who cares what he says, sings or believes?

In 2006, the Golden State Warriors taught me much about converting loyal season ticket holders into true fans. After delivering twelve years of non-playoff teams, they rewarded our unwavering loyalty with a 23% price increase! We fans coughed up the cash knowing that others would pay even more for our seats if we were to relinquish them. Wouldn’t you love to have clients like that? There are a hundreds of Bay Area entertainment sources, but the Warriors have positioned themselves as the only game in town. Rockers like Jerry Garcia, father of the cult-like, Deadheads, and Gene Simmons of KISS had the right idea when they said, “*Stop trying to be the best. Be the only one*”.

How can your business be the only game in town?

However, it is one thing for entertainers to establish emotional connections; what do you do if you are just selling widgets? After a shopping trip at the Mall, I was inundated with answers to that question: Piped in smell of cookies and cinnamon buns; Plush soft goods inviting my touch; Bright colors grabbing my eye and luring me in; Lively upbeat music; Yummy food samples; Dressing room mirrors that make me look skinnier; Vignettes/home displays that feel just like home; Clerks spraying ladies with perfume, etc...

We must learn from businesses that create shopping experiences. Earlier this year, I noticed people literally camping out for the Grand Opening of the Sacramento IKEA. Every day, like people at every corner in the USA, I wake up and smell the coffee at Starbucks. My wife and clients actually like getting their car fixed now as they rave about BMW's service department. TAB members play CEO-roles all week and then ride in Harley rallies on weekends. If you want clients to tattoo your brand name all over their arms like *Harley Davidson* does, create emotional connections whether you are selling products or services.

Still searching, I then read Ken Blanchard's *Raving Fans*. This quick-read book shows why "*customer satisfaction is never enough*". It drives home the importance of finding out what your clients really want: "*A Raving Fan Relationship goes far beyond your company's product. If you do not listen to your client's thoughts and desires, you fail to give him what he needs as a product because you don't know what his need really is.*" Then once you know what they want, "*you deliver what they want plus 1%*". If you can keep improving by 1% a week, you will be over 50% better by the end of the year. Blanchard says the key to creating Raving Fans is to develop the systems that deliver consistently while fostering continuous improvement and the flexibility that allows you to alter your course rapidly as your clients require.

Still wondering how to create fans when you are in a business like professional service, I decided to read *Making Rain- The Secrets of Building Lifelong Client Loyalty*. In it, Andrew Sorbel says the nine keys to lifelong loyalty are: "*Do it faster, do it better, do it different or clever, be better prepared, see the problem differently, provide unique information, be assessable, listen, learn fast, and establish an emotional connection*". In addition, you must systematically build relationship capital as a way to increase the value of your business immensely. You must dig to find the unarticulated expectations of your clients. Sorbel adds that rather than just meeting expectations you must work to continually improve your client's condition. Finally, you must regularly review with your clients what you have done for them and help them learn how to articulate to others how why they are your fans.

I finally get it now. Always think in terms of developing advocacy. What distinguishes an advocate from someone who simply knows what you do? They are fans. They are willing and able to be vocal about their successful experience with you. Identify all your existing advocates and cultivate them regularly.