

8 Proven Ways to Curate Your Customers into a Community

To win in business, create a tribe of die-hard fans.

July 26, 2019 6 min read

Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own.

This is a guest post by Yanik Silver, author of Evolved Enterprise and founder of Maverick1000, an invitation-only global network of top entrepreneurs and leaders, and an Advisor in The Oracles.

The world today is drowning in content but starving for connection. After all, we're social creatures who originally came from tribal societies. Today, we create tribal loyalties around our interests, passions, and identities – and brands that align with them.

Entrepreneurs and companies that create a community of loyal customers will always win. Imagine that your customers not only consistently buy from you, but also become zealots who tell all their friends about you. You can spend less on marketing and focus on what really matters. Sounds pretty good, right?

Here are the eight surefire ways to curate your own community of raving fans.

1. Motivate them with a mission.

As humans, we want to be part of something bigger than ourselves. That's why the strongest communities are

underpinned by a mission or purpose. I created Maverick1000 to give entrepreneurs the push and support needed to accomplish a higher vision because I believe business can be the greatest lever to make a difference. As a result, we also live, grow, and play together.

Give your followers something to strive for. Not only will this get them involved and excited – but they will also see it as their mission to convert others.

2. Inspire them with your origin story.

To truly connect with you, your tribe needs to know how you got started and why. What was your inspiration? What obstacles did you overcome? Your mission and creation story are intertwined.

You might have started your business because of your surroundings or when you couldn't find what you were looking for. Blake Mycoskie created the shoe company TOMS to give away one pair for every pair sold after he saw children without shoes in Argentina. I started Maverick1000 when I couldn't find an entrepreneurial community that helped me grow my business while bringing me more happiness and meaning.

3. Define your unique language.

Create your brand for an archetype your audience wants to become or a characteristic they want to amplify. For example, Harley Davidson riders are outlaws, while Tough Mudder is about being the hero. Then develop your own unique language to capture that identity, so your customers attach it to you. That's why "Star Trek" fans identify as "Trekkies" and Lady Gaga has her "Little Monsters."

This can create a positive "us versus them" mentality. Just

like you want to attract those who are right for your tribe, you also want to repel those who are not. Think back to the Apple ads that distinguished between two types of people: Apple users and PC users.

Your unique language can be used in different ways. For instance, “Maverick Mondays” are random, crazy occurrences like zombie flash mobs, and “Maverick Moments” are when members share funny stories or big insights from our experiences. You could also solidify what your community stands for with a compelling manifesto declaring your values.

4. Create barriers to entry.

Qualify your members before they can be part of the community. The more we struggle to attain something, the more we value it. Members of elite groups like the Navy SEALs have tight, cohesive bonds because they’re such difficult groups to get into. You better believe that our members appreciated the special patch they earned after walking for three miles with a 200-pound log.

This isn’t about being exclusionary just for the sake of it. You can create positive “hoops” for prospective members to jump through, such as doing something impactful for the community before they can join.

5. Identify your members with artifacts.

Artifacts identify someone as part of a community. For example, the yellow Livestrong bracelets identify those standing up to cancer in some way.

Consider how your community members can earn your artifacts, which have more value when you can’t buy them. Harley Davidson leather jackets have patches that you earn by participating in

different rides. Or create even more fun with it, like the outdoor adventure group Sisters on the Fly, which has merit badges such as the “martini badge.”

6. Offer insider access.

Many cult brands cater to outliers. Their customers appreciate that not just anyone can have what they do. For instance, Johnny Cupcakes built their business on limited-edition clothing and accessories and turned down retailers asking to sell their designs in stores.

You can give your community this “insider” status in different ways. You might create valuable content just for your community. Give them first access to special announcements, opportunities, or sales, or create ones just for them. During the annual blackout sale on Despair.com, only insiders can access the website, not to mention the special prices.

7. Establish rituals.

Rituals tie your community together even further. Create rituals throughout the customer journey, including their inauguration, anniversaries, and other special acknowledgments.

For example, the Detroit Red Wings hockey team has a long-standing tradition of throwing an octopus onto the ice during the playoffs. Maverick has a ritual for new members that involves industrial-strength plastic wrap and a green pill, but that’s all I can say about it.

8. Host exceptional experiences.

Unique experiences bring people together on a different level that fosters deep relationships. Country music star Keith Urban gave VIP treatment to a group of super fans who attended

100 of his concerts. Not only do they love him more as a result; he has also received a lot of publicity for it.

The more exceptional or intense the experience, the tighter the bond. Our members have experienced a zero-gravity flight like NASA astronauts and flown jets in Russia. Add an element of surprise to up the ante, such as surprising members with a snowmobile trip to dinner on a secluded peak in the mountains.

The Net Promoter Score is a tool that measures customer loyalty on a scale from -100 to 100. A higher score typically corresponds to higher revenue. Our score increased by nearly 20 points after we intentionally incorporated more of these eight elements into our community. So go out and use them to grow your business, build an amazing tribe, and do great things in the world.

Download the first three chapters of Yanik's book "Evolved Enterprise" for free here and visit the Maverick1000 website for more about the exclusive group.

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/337239>