

## **What Is A Brand Ambassador?**

Robin Brogdon, MA

BluePrints Veterinary Marketing Group, Inc.

**[www.blueprintsvmg.com](http://www.blueprintsvmg.com)**

What exactly is a brand champion or brand ambassador?

You often hear the term brand champion, but what really is it and how do I create one?

Answer: It is a company's first and last line of defense when it comes to keeping customer loyalty.

Customers surveyed said the most important factors in staying loyal to a particular brand are:

- 1) Consistent quality
- 2) Customer service
- 3) Price

Other research shows that approx 70% of the purchase decision is made for emotional, not economic reasons, especially when buying services. Clearly, quality and service are key to a brand relationship with its customers and by customers, I am referring to both referring veterinarians and pet owners. And quality and service can be controlled by your staff – your brand ambassadors. People form relationships with people and it is people who are the human, interactive face of a brand.

People buy brands for the brand experience and the employees of a company and their interactions with them are a big part of that experience – and a large part of what builds customer loyalty. Note that I said loyalty, not satisfaction. Satisfied customers change products or services, and frequently, for no other reason than to try something new. But loyal customers are much less likely to - and loyal customers mean profits.

A 1996 article by Jeff Resnick stated that companies that excel at creating and maintaining loyal customers can command prices that are four to seven percent higher than weaker competitors and that they can generate three times more profit.

Again, brand ambassadors are needed to make this happen. If the brand doesn't deliver on the promise, then the loyalty doesn't get created or worse yet, it gets eroded.

In many ways a brand is a living breathing thing – much more than a visual – it's emotional and behavioral. Behavior reinforces the brand and employees have a great and important role to play here. When an employee and a company live the brand, they then can realize real gains and a competitive edge in the marketplace.

In order to ‘live the brand’ employees must truly understand the brand:

- What it is
- Why it is
- What it promises
- How it delivers
- Why you are better/different than any other brand
- Why the consumers want it
- What their role is in relation to the brand
- They must create and deliver the experience that reinforces the brand

As a true ambassador, the employee needs to have a relationship with the brand that goes beyond customer service. They need to feel part of the company success or failure. You must make them understand how their actions impact the success of the company.

Companies that succeed do this: Walmart has its Associates, Disney has its Cast Members. They work hard at making their employees not only walk the walk but talk the talk. They make them vested in the brand and feel part of the team.

Is asking the employee to have a relationship with the brand any different than asking the customers? And knowing that people still prefer to deal with people, doesn't it make sense to have brand ambassadors who engage customers and foster relationships that lead to loyalty?

Having brand evangelists/ambassadors working for you instead of ordinary employees does 2 things:

1. Those who understand the brand are better able to deliver on brand work each day. The result is a more consistent brand message and positive experience for your customers and prospects.
2. Brand ambassadors build your brand both inside and outside your work environment. They talk to friends and associates about the brand.

Essentially, they are human billboards communicating your company message to those around them. And they do this for their own conviction and pride – not extra pay.

Your HR department will enjoy the benefits too – better longevity, more willing to support the company through difficult times and continue to boast about the brand after they've left the organization.

So how do you do this? How do employees learn to be brand ambassadors?

**First, they need to be the right employees.**

**Second, they need to be shown!**

Brand ambassadorship must be demonstrated by the top all the way down the ranks. It isn't just a role for a few, It is for ALL employees.

So ask yourself, are your employees aware of the part they play in creating a relationship and engendering loyalty with customers?

If you would like assistance in building a brand and brand ambassadors for your practice, look no further than BluePrints Veterinary Marketing Group, Inc. or [www.blueprintsvmg.com](http://www.blueprintsvmg.com)