

Leadership Talking Points

NEWSLETTER

Your Real Job: Creating Promoters


You're in trouble if your customers only like you—they need to love you.

So I walked into the Apple Store® to buy a new car charger for my phone. My old one was acting weird—sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't. Kes, the service person who met me, said, "Sure, we have a bunch of those. Step over here and I'll show you."

The store was crazy busy and I didn't really want to bother this guy for such a simple purchase, but he walked me over to a display and briefly told me about each charger. Then he asked, "Why do you want a car charger?"

Well, I thought that was an odd question ("Um, to charge my phone in the car?"), but he followed it up immediately by asking, "Are you having trouble keeping your phone charged?"

"Yes," I said. "The charge isn't lasting as long as it used to." And Kes explained that my phone was engineered for about 500 recharging cycles and that over the years it would gradually lose some ability to hold a charge.



Then Kes said, “Car chargers depend on the alternator in your vehicle, which puts out uneven amounts of voltage. So your charger might seem to work better some days more than others. Just so you’ll know.”

I thanked him and bought the car charger. “Here’s my card. I’ll contact you in a couple of weeks to find out how it’s working for you.”

Then I went to see his manager. “Your guy Kes is amazing,” I said. “Last year I bought a car charger at another store and they just handed it to me. I couldn’t figure out why it didn’t work very well, and so I came in here to buy a new one. Kes explained all about my phone and how chargers work... I’m blown away that he took that much time on a busy day to teach me about a simple \$29 transaction.”

The manager grinned and explained, “Our people aren’t salespeople—they’re teachers. We emphasize this. We train them to think about *why* a particular customer wants something from us. What problem are customers trying to solve? Why do they have this problem? What is the real job customers wants us to do for them? And we try to do *that* job.”

I left the store thinking hard about what I had just experienced. I’ve been telling this story now for a while. I’ve told it to all my friends. I’ve put it up on Facebook®. Many people have already heard it, and now you’re reading it.

That makes me a “promoter” of the Apple Store. I’m advertising to thousands of people the great experience I have when I go there. I’m an unpaid arm of Apple’s marketing division. (I assume they have one.) I don’t know what impact I’m having as a promoter of Apple, but I know that thousands of people will know this story before I’m through.

The thing that makes Apple great is that they understand what it means to create “promoters.” They see that as their job.

And that’s your job too. You might think your job is to satisfy your organization’s customers, but it’s more than that. Satisfied customers don’t talk about you much; promoters talk about you all the time. Satisfied customers will go somewhere else if they feel like it; promoters stay with you. Satisfied customers like you; promoters *love* you.

Your real job is creating *promoters*.

How do you create promoters?

Think about my Apple Store experience.

Kes treated me with courtesy and patience, even though there was a crush of customers. Kes took the time to find out the “real job to be done,” that is, to understand my real problem and to help solve it.

Kes offered to follow up with me to make sure everything was okay with the product. And, by the way, he did so. I got an email from him a few weeks later, and I replied that the charger was working just fine. Again, I was astonished at this level of interest in “just another customer.”

So why am I a promoter of the Apple Store? Because the people there take the time to care, to teach, and to make a friend.

Could anything be simpler?

Questions to Ponder

What factors produce such loyalty in this writer? What’s the difference between a satisfied customer and a “promoter”? Does your organization generate promoters? Where’s the evidence? What could you do to create more promoters? What are the consequences for organizations that don’t produce promoters?