

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PARTNERS

Advocates for Sale!

BuzzAgent is a social marketing company that claims to *accelerate word of mouth*. It was recently purchased by Dunnhumby (a customer relationship agency owned by UK retailer Tesco) for a reported \$60 million!

Developing Advocates

We are certainly believers in the power of advocacy and word of mouth. We've found BzzAgent's approach to **cultivating brand advocates** very similar to our own approach in many ways. Combining our words and theirs:

1. Encourage advocates to express their opinions and product/service experiences openly and freely in as many places as possible.
2. Provide them an 'insider's view' of the company. Give access to events, make exclusive offers, and/or provide 'sneak peeks'. These activities provide content for stories to tell and things to share with others.
3. Engage with advocates on their own turf. Allow them to interact with your brand through the channels they prefer.
4. Recognize them and celebrate their participation in your brand.

You Can do that with 'Mercenaries'?

But it's the 5th and most fundamental point of the BuzzAgent approach that we find failing. What do you think? BzzAgent has recruited 800,000 people who they say will serve as 'advocates'. For a price, BzzAgent claims they can unleash some portion of that group to serve as advocates for a client's brand. To accomplish this they tell us that in addition to steps 1 to 4 above, they distribute free samples to give the recruited-advocates 'experience' with the product so their reviews will be "personal and much more meaningful".

A Better Alternative

With all due respect to Dunnhumby and BzzAgent, we have to ask: 1) How does one trust these "agents" to be skilled and enthused advocates, and not simply folks who simply wanted a free sample? 2) Unless these people would have bought the product themselves, how does one know they or their friends would ever actually buy it? 3) With only having sampled the promoted brand, how can these "agents" really be credible sources of information? 4) Finally, why try to build interest and enthusiasm about your brand with such *paid advocates*? The **Customer Experience Partners'** approach calls for following steps 1 to 4 but among a group of one's existing customers – not random mercenaries!

We identify the most behaviorally loyal and emotionally committed customers among a brand's franchise, and then further qualify them to find those with the best *advocacy personalities* and *communications skills*. The result is actual customers who will deliver a better quality and a greater quantity of *advocacy/word of mouth* and do it much more cost efficiently. To learn more about **Identifying & Arming Customer Advocates** just ask us:

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