

## CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PARTNERS

## Influentials vs. Everyday Advocates



Hopefully you know us for our conviction to word of mouth spread by *everyday advocates* – our term for passionate customers who are willing to recommend a brand, product or service (and who have stories to pass along). Often when we describe our Identifying & Arming process (to find and “arm” everyday advocates) we are quickly challenged. We are confronted with other word of mouth programs that are centered on small groups of people called “key influentials”. These folk are described as imbued with almost supernatural communication powers; they can reach tens or even hundreds of thousands of potential future customers, so the story goes, with a just a few taps on their keyboards! We are told that even our *best* customer advocates, in contrast, could typically reach only a handful or two of friends, relatives, neighbors, co-workers, and perhaps an additional few dozen strangers. If influentials actually wield such power, their productivity would be compelling and would question the value of using everyday advocates.

### New from the pages of *Advertising Age*

But in a feature article in last week’s *Advertising Age* (*How Content Is Really Shared: Close Friends, Not ‘Influencers’*) Jon Steinberg of BuzzFeed and Jack Krwczyk of StumbleUpon have defended customer advocates with solid data. So rather than asking you to take our word for it, let’s review what they’ve found.

Steinberg reported that BuzzFeed “looked at the 50 stories that had received the most Facebook traffic since mid-2007. A handful of these posts had millions of Facebook referrers, and even the smallest had nearly 100,000 Facebook views. **But the median ratio of Facebook views-to-shares was merely 9-to-1.**” He continued, “this means that for every Facebook share, only nine people visited the story. Even the largest stories on Facebook are the product of lots of *intimate sharing* -- not one person sharing and hundreds of thousands of people clicking. The median ratio for Twitter was even lower, at 5-to-1.”

### Everyday Advocates: The Conduit for *Intimate Sharing*

Krwczyk stated that StumbleUpon “looked at a window of more than 5.5 million shares over the course of 45 days. The results indicate that sharing directly with friends is the most common outlet for content. For each outbound share to a social-media outlet, a StumbleUpon user shared at least twice directly (through email or using StumbleUpon). Intimate sharing outnumbered broadcast [sharing] by 2-to-1.” Their conclusion: “There is little data to support so-called ‘influencer behavior’ in social marketing. Rather, the data suggest that content and ideas spread online through **large numbers of people sharing within small groups.**”

At **Customer Experience Partners** we have long taken the position that there is nothing wrong with having key influentials on your side, but that among many brands’ existing customers there is likely a select group of *everyday advocates* who are trusted by their friends, relatives, neighbors and co-workers and together have their own strong voice and impact. To learn about how to **Identify & Arm** those customer advocates contact:

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