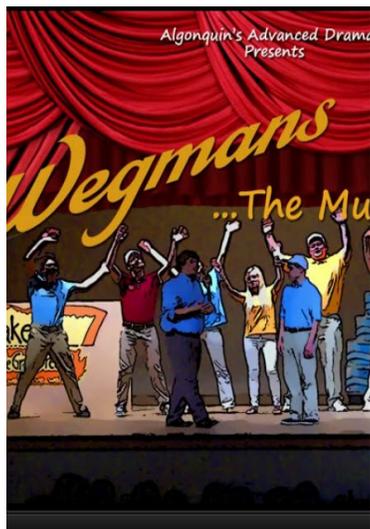


CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PARTNERS

User Generated Content - Media Power to the People!



No matter which side of the Facebook/General Motors controversy you stand on, we all recognize that with access to social media consumers are taking a larger part in establishing the image of most brands. While what consumers say or write to one another has always been important, typically it could be 'drowned out' by the weight of corporate advertising, promotions, and public relations. But today with consumers having their own media (e.g. Facebook pages, Twitter tweets, YouTube videos, text messaging, etc.) the power is shifting. Coupled with access, consumers also have tools that allow them to produce quality messages from photos and design videos complete with music.

UGC: Sometimes It's Positive, and Sometimes It's Negative

So like it or not we are now clearly in the era of UGC (User Generated Content). UGC comes in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes the message can be negative (ranging in power from the review you may have read about a local dentist to videos gone viral: *United Breaks Guitars*) but just as easily it can be positive. The positives don't always make the headlines, but consider the case of Algonquin High in Northborough, Massachusetts. The drama class decided to stage a production about of all things, a supermarket chain. They conceived and presented *Wegmans ... The Musical!*

For those outside the upstate New York and Massachusetts region, Wegmans is a family-owned regional supermarket chain with about 75 stores that's headquartered just outside Rochester, NY. It is known as a leader in customer loyalty (some may remember Alec Baldwin's explanation – on the Letterman Show - that inaccessibility to a Wegmans store was the reason his mother refused to move from upstate New York), but even for this fabled supermarket, a musical may be a first. Not only did the musical draw attention within the school and the community of family and friends, but thanks to public social media it's now on *YouTube* where in one week it's had over 18,000 views.

Letting Go is Hard to Do

The challenge that all brands must face with UGC is, of course, that the message is totally beyond the brands' control. While Wegmans did donate some props and was kind enough to cater the after-show cast party, they had to let go and hope for the best. The students learned about the company, observed what they did, and told the story as they saw it on stage.

Customer Experience Partners has long understood the power of customer advocates and UGC. We recognize that customers will write and speak as negatively or positively and as frequently or infrequently as they want. But we also know that brands can help along the way by: 1) identifying those customers who are behaviorally committed and emotionally linked to a brand, and finding those among that group who have the "communicator gene" and; 2) 'arming' those individuals with content and opportunity (rather than making them find it themselves like the Algonquin High students did). To learn how contact us:

vavra@customerexperiencepartners.com or pruden@customerexperiencepartners.com

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PARTNERS, LLC

DOUG PRUDEN—TERRY VAVRA

www.customerexperiencepartners.com

P.O. Box 574
Allendale, NJ 07401
Phone: 203-655-0090

Unsubscribe: unsubscribe@customerexperiencepartners.com

Copyright 2012