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On the Mark

Helping mark organizations for success

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Three Reasons Your Employees Should Also be Your Customers/Members

A few weeks ago, I escorted our senior staff writer, Colleen Cormier, to the Apple Store – also known as my happy place. Yes...I am married to Apple. Each member of my family owns some kind of MacBook. We also own iPhones, iPads and iPods. If there is a little "i" in front of a device, I probably own it. I also provide an Apple computer for each of my staff members. This was Colleen's transition to the "other side."

My experience there is always a positive one, but something one of the employees said took us both by surprise. He said "I don't use a Mac."

A similar scenario happened not too long ago during a marketing audit we were conducting for a client. One of the employees told us he didn't use his credit union's products and services – not one. Why would a customer or member use your products if your own employees don't?

"Internal branding and vocal brand advocacy from employees will be minimally successful at best if your employees don't actually use your brand," writes [Susan Gunelius](#), president and CEO at [KeySplash Creative, Inc.](#), in a blog at [corporateeye.com](#). "How can they truly talk about your brand, advocate your brand, develop appropriate new products, and sell your product if they've never or rarely used it?"

Here are three reasons why your employees should also be your costumers/members.

Best Brand Ambassadors

Your best customers are the ones who not only use your products and services, but also refer you to their family, friends, business associates, etc. They are your best brand ambassadors. Shouldn't that describe your employees? Perhaps an even more important question to ask is which of your competitors your employees are promoting, if they are not promoting you. When customers or members find out your employees do not bank with you, they probably ask where your employees do their banking and why.

Outstanding Customer Service

Employees who use your products and services have a deep understanding of how they work. This makes them better sales people and better equipped to offer solutions when customers or members have questions. All of your employees should be able to answer basic questions about your products and services.

Built-in Beta Testers

The people who use your products and services can provide valuable feedback about what makes them great and how to make them better. Encourage their feedback and use that input to make improvements and to develop new offerings.

Your employees should be your best customers and your biggest fans. Give them free or discounted

access to your products and services and appreciate their feedback. If they're not promoting you, there's a good chance they are promoting your competition.

Brand Plans to Grow Your Financial Institution

The purpose of a brand plan is to outline the steps and processes necessary for your financial institution to initiate and maintain a consistent and unified brand to consumers. Your executive management team and marketing staff are fully capable of executing a brand plan, but a great deal of time, energy and expertise is also required for successful implementation. For help creating a brand plan that will move your credit union or bank down its path of desired growth, contact Mark at mark@markarnold.com or (214) 538-4147.

Do Your Organization's Annual Goals Support the Bottom Line?

by Colleen Cormier
Senior Staff Writer, On the Mark Strategies

My husband works in the aviation industry. Over the years, he's worked for several different companies that didn't seem to understand the real cost of doing business. These companies frequently denied department requests for things like tools that would increase efficiency and generate revenue more quickly. Last week, it was a \$300 tool for a job that is supposed to generate several hundred thousand dollars in revenue.

I say "supposed to generate" because the company is seeing the finish line, but it isn't monitoring the race for efficiency. It is focusing on the payout, but it isn't factoring in the added labor expenses that could have been saved by purchasing that special tool. Who knows what else they are missing?

A friend in a different industry told me a similar story last month. Her company actually had to lay off two employees right before Christmas, because making payroll got more challenging every month. Unfortunately, it took lay-offs for the company to analyze how each employee spends his or her time. Even though each employee makes annual goals that leaders approve, nobody seemed to notice that most of the employees were executing tasks that had nothing to do with generating revenue. Even worse, when they analyzed the costs of an annual event that is supposed to be their highest revenue generator of the year, they realized they were losing money when the calculated labor costs. Nobody had ever factored the cost of labor into the overall event costs.

These situations happen more often than you might expect in corporate America – even in financial institutions. From my one awful experience (which lasted several years) with one of the nation's largest banks, I can tell you some financial institutions have more waste than they have profit, and they don't even realize it.

Credit unions and community banks cannot afford to fall into this trap. Your bottom line depends on how efficiently you operate, how well you price your products, how well you engage with your employees and how well you differentiate yourself from the competition. If your organization's annual goals don't support that, realign them now while we are still at the beginning of a new year.

"Implementing effective goal alignment throughout your organization in support of a well-defined strategy is one of the most important things you can do," according to an [article](#) at successfactors.com.

Start with your annual plan. Make goals based on what your organization plans to accomplish this year. Put quarterly measurements in place to ensure your goals stay on track. Communicate those goals to all employees and help them have a stake in meeting those goals.

Effective goal setting is the most simple and cohesive practice you can put in place to maximize your financial institution's bottom line.

Blog Posts

[Bank or Credit Union Name Changes](#)

An increasing number of banks and credit unions have either undergone a [name change](#) or are seriously considering one. Reasons for this include: the need to be more competitive, reaching additional potential new consumers, economic changes limiting the viability of single-sponsor financial institutions and general population demographic shifts. Whatever the reason your bank or credit union may have behind its need for a [name change](#), the job is a daunting one. Changing a financial institution name involves much more than just updating letterhead and the website. To approach the name change process in a more strategic way, we recommend the following trademarked four-step plan. [read more](#)

[Execute Brand Discipline - Just Say No](#)

Picture it. You are ABC Bank or Credit Union, proudly serving your customers or members since the beginning of time. As part of your mission to provide the best possible financial solutions to your target audience, you have formed partnerships along the way which provide additional benefits to members or customers – maybe investment services or discount programs to save them money. As you grow, you see the value in supporting meaningful outreach programs like the Children's Miracle Network. Who doesn't want to help kids? All of these partnerships fit into your brand and make your customers or members genuinely proud to do business with you. Sounds good so far, right? As time goes on, you agree to help promote these corporate partners. After all, you want your target audience to know these benefits are available to them, right? You put a stack of brochures here, a small banner ad on the website and maybe an article in your e-newsletter...for every single partner. Before you know it, an innocent desire to promote a partnership makes your financial institution look more like a bus station or one of those welcome centers you stop at after crossing the state line on a road trip. [read more](#)

[Marketing Audits: Boldy Going Where Few Marketers Have Gone Before](#)

In one of my favorite scenes from [Star Trek: The Next Generation](#) (nerd alert) the character Q warns Captain Picard "If you can't take a little bloody nose, maybe you ought to go back home and crawl under your bed. It's not safe out here. It's wondrous, with treasures to satiate desires both subtle and gross. But it's not for the timid." The same thing applies to your bank or credit union and its expeditions into branding. An authentic journey into branding, whether it's your first time or a re-branding effort, is not for the faint of heart. Done correctly, branding digs deeply into the DNA of your bank or credit union. [read more](#)