



## Customer Advocacy: Your Best Sales Strategy

Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman, authors of *First Break All the Rules*, assert that customer advocacy is the most effective sales tool any business can employ, be you a butcher, a baker, or a candlestick maker. When a customer voluntarily recommends your product or service to another person, that represents the most influential sales pitch you could ever hope for. It's a personal, trustworthy, independent, third-party guarantee of performance. This level of customer loyalty is called advocacy.

So how do you convert customers into advocates? Like a good many things, such as a reputation, advocacy is the byproduct of other actions. Bill Walsh, the famous San Francisco 49ers coach, says that when you do all the right things, other good outcomes naturally follow. Buckingham and Coffman claim it takes four things:

- Deliver what you promise
- Make it convenient
- Always consider your service or product from the customer's point of view
- Help the customer become self-reliant

We'd like to give you our take on this and how you can use the 60 Minute Strategic Plan to ensure that your customers are your advocates.

### **Delivering What You Promise**

Always deliver the features and benefits that you, your sales force, and promotional materials guarantee. If you say you'll respond promptly, do so. If you promise to get something done by a certain due date, do everything you can to make that happen. If you say a problem will be quickly and permanently fixed, make sure that it is.

### **Making it Convenient**

People juggle very busy lives. They are impatient and demand it now, not later. They want it simple, not complex. Make sure you know where and how you fit as it relates to customer convenience. Many of our clients use the 60 Minute Strategic Plan to create a "Convenience Improvement Plan." Time is of the essence and customers greatly appreciate it when you value their time.

### **Consider the Customer's Point of View**

Seldom, if ever, does your product or service mean as much to your customer as it does to you. Your product or service is your reason for being, but it is only one part (and perhaps a small part) of your customer's reason for being. To gain perspective on the subject, two of the questions we ask our clients to answer are "How does your customer make/lose money?" and "How does your product/service contribute to that equation?" Make sure you know where and how you fit into your customer's needs. If there is room for improvement, we suggest using the 60 Minute Strategic Plan to create a strategy for how to make those improvements happen.

## **Help Your Customers Become Self-Reliant**

Consider Home Depot's slogan "You can do it, we can help." This is a claim of support, education, and assistance to the do-it-yourself customer. Now consider the lousy assembly instructions that accompany many products. This represents the very antithesis of customer assistance. Using the 60 Minute Strategic Plan, create a plan of action that educates and promotes self-reliance with regard to your product or service. This may require some research to determine the customer's frame of reference, but it would be well worth the time and effort.

Go now and, with the assistance of the 60 Minute Strategic Plan, create advocates.