# Customer Leaders
## Magazine

**Q2 2024**

**BUILDING A CUSTOMER-CENTRIC CULTURE FROM THE GROUND UP**

**MARKETING SUCCESS IN THE AI ERA**

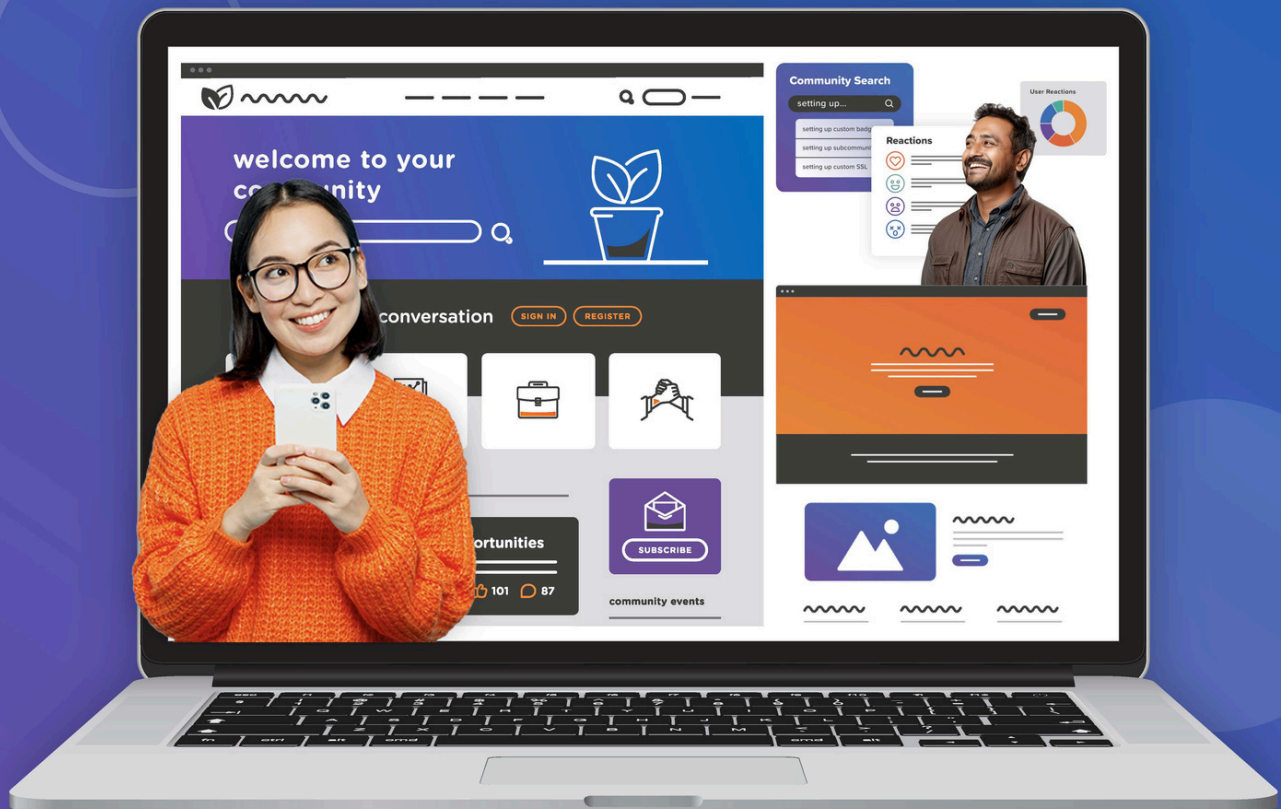**HEALTHIER CUSTOMER DATABASE**

**THE INTRAPRENEURIAL COMMUNITY MANAGER**

## Kristi Faltorusso
### Chief Customer Officer at ClientSuccess

Hello Everyone,

Welcome to the latest edition of Customer Leaders Magazine! Our core mission is to offer outstanding content, exclusive resources, and events to keep you informed and drive your professional growth. The MyCLI Community is your go-to spot online to connect, learn and grow.

We are proud of this edition, which genuinely highlights our commitment to a customer-centric mindset and the power of community. We hope you enjoy the feature with Kristi Faltorusso, Chief Customer Officer at ClientSuccess, and all the fantastic articles in our Q2 edition. If you'd like to submit an article for a future edition, submissions are now open.

Thank you again for entrusting us and supporting our mission. We're always receptive to your feedback – feel free to reach out anytime at info@mycli.co.

Now, delve into this edition! Enjoy!

Adrian Speyer
VP Marketing & Community

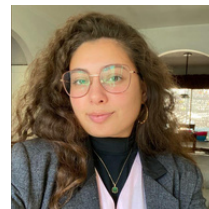# Table of Contents

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**Bill Mcglade**
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Community & Marketing Manager

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# Social Media Explained 3.0: Marketing Success in the AI Era
## by Mark Schaefer

# Chapter 1: Look Up

I recently had a consulting role with a Fortune 100 company. The organization had just appointed a new Chief Marketing Officer, and she was embarking on a comprehensive review of their wide-ranging marketing efforts.

My specific task was evaluating the effectiveness of the company's social media efforts. "I have a feeling that this isn't working as it should," the CMO confided in me. "I'd like you to examine the current state of affairs and provide recommendations for improvement."

With offices spanning every American city with a population exceeding 20,000 people, this massive company wisely established a centralized team to coordinate social media activities for its franchise offices. This approach, known as the "hub and spoke" model, is commonly employed in large companies. It makes little sense for thousands of offices to manage their social media content and strategies individually, so the company assigned a team of experts to oversee the strategy. The central office had been producing social media content for more than a decade, distributing it to the franchise offices every day without fail.

My first step was to visit the customers—in this case, the franchise offices that were using and disseminating the company's social media assets. I selected seven diverse offices from various parts of the country. Some were in major cities, some were in small towns. Some were thriving, while others faced deep competitive challenges. I made a deliberate effort to include franchise owners from diverse backgrounds, especially various age groups.

A common theme emerged among all the offices I visited: none of them used the social media content provided by the headquarters social media team!

"It's out of touch with the times," one franchise owner remarked. "It's embarrassing."

"We receive minimal engagement," stated another. "We are better off creating our own localized content."

"A waste of time," a young owner declared. "We've ceased using company social media content altogether."

The company was squandering millions of dollars on ineffective social media content that nobody was using. Moreover, nearly every franchise office in the country was duplicating the headquarters efforts, often by hiring local companies to create content and manage their social media engagement.

The corporate social media content was so terrible that a group of franchise owners had banded together to establish an independent business supplying social media content to company franchises. Smart franchise owners were profiting from the company's disastrous social media efforts.

While this might sound like a sad and extreme failure, it's a common finding in many of the companies I work with, both large and small.

My client had failed to "look up."

By this, I mean that they had failed to notice how much the world had changed around them. When the social media era began, many companies sensibly assembled a social media team and set them to work. And work they did, generating content (and more content), engaging with audiences, and posting regularly. In the early days -- when a corporate social media presence

was novel -- they likely achieved some success.

However, the world moved forward while they fell asleep:

- The digital landscape became saturated with content.
- New platforms like TikTok emerged, and customers shifted away from traditional content forms.
- Algorithms evolved into powerful recommendation engines, placing new demands on content and engagement.
- Cultural shifts led to new customer expectations for speed, responsiveness, and customer service through social media.
- AI enabled more efficient social media management but also created the potential for misinformation at scale.

My client was suffering from a prevalent issue. They were **social media sleepwalking**, functioning but disconnected from what was happening in the real world.

Over my career, I've worked with dozens of companies, non-profits, universities, hospital networks, hotel chains, and government agencies. And 95% of them were sleepwalking.

You don't want to be zombie marketing like that, and this book serves as your wake-up call. The sleepwalking is over, and we'll start by zapping this overhyped notion of social media strategy.

Time to look up, my friend.

# Chapter 2: Social Media is Not a Strategy

Before we explore the role of social media in the marketing world, let's establish some philosophies about marketing in general and then we'll get into the nitty-gritty.

One of the highlights of my professional life was studying for three years under one of the world's greatest business thought leaders, Peter Drucker. Although best known as the father of professional business management, he also codified many of the standard ideas of modern marketing.

Dr. Drucker cut to the essence: "The purpose of business is to create and keep a customer. Marketing creates customers."

This is an excellent place to start in our journey to end social media sleepwalking. Too many social media marketers aim toward a goal of increased engagement, more likes, or winning an industry award. But are all these posts and tweets and reels creating customers?

As we'll learn later, marketing effectiveness is not always easy to measure. Attribution can be extremely difficult, perhaps impossible in some cases. But that doesn't impact the trajectory of your efforts – are you in the

business of creating customers?

Losing focus on the goal of creating customers is the biggest contribution to social media marketing ineffectiveness. We create and post and engage like mad because everyone else is doing it. We exhaust ourselves by joining every new platform because we're afraid not to. We embrace every trend and meme, even when they direct us away from our business goals.

Look at what you're doing. If it's not aimed at creating and retaining customers, *stop it.*

### *Two types of marketing*

Another chronic problem in our world is confusing brand and direct marketing Let's get that straight with a lesson from a brand titan, Gatorade.

Gatorade, a PepsiCo product, is a formidable brand. It holds a whopping 75 percent share of the $30 billion sports drink market. This massive awareness and dominance were earned over decades of innovation and ubiquitous sports marketing. If you watch a popular sport on television, you're likely to see some presence from Gatorade — on the field, near the field, or in an advertisement.

On the grocery store shelf, Gatorade is about $2 per bottle, and its biggest competitor, Powerade, is around 89 cents a bottle. As the superior brand, Gatorade can charge more than a 100 percent premium because of the trust established through its

brand marketing.

As the upstart competitor and a far-distant number two in the market, Powerade must deploy a different marketing strategy and compete through discounts, pay for favorable product placement, and maybe eke out some advantage through the powerful distribution system of its parent company, Coca-Cola.

Here we see the two different types of marketing at work.

Because Powerade is a less well-known brand, it's forced to compete in the trenches for more sales. It will devote most of its budget to *direct marketing.*

*Direct marketing* is transaction-oriented and measurable. If Powerade runs an ad on Facebook and counts clicks that convert to sales, that's direct marketing. If they have an end-of-aisle display that chugs out coupons for shoppers who pass by, that's direct marketing. They are moving product. It's relatively easy to measure.

Gatorade, on the other hand, sits comfortably atop the sports drink kingdom as the most beloved brand because of the trust and loyalty earned through their relevance within sports culture.

Gatorade is deploying brand marketing. The goal of brand marketing is to create an emotional expectation with your customers. The names Nike, Disney, and Walmart will create different emotional reactions for

you. That reaction is because of the extensive brand marketing from these companies.

The bulk of Gatorade's marketing budget is spent on brand development featuring superstars like Lionel Messi, event sponsorships, and brand activations at glamorous places like the World Cup or Super Bowl.

And that marketing investment is almost impossible to measure.

One of the most beloved American sports traditions is the Gatorade bath. At the end of a victorious match, players sneak up behind a coach or star player and dump the huge sideline container of ice-cold Gatorade over their head. This is always captured on TV as a cultural moment that might be replayed by fans for years.

This jubilant scene can only happen because Gatorade is served on the sidelines due to some team or league sponsorship agreement (that's part of *brand marketing).*

What's the ROI of the Gatorade bath? How much Gatorade is purchased by fans because of a league sponsorship deal that places the brand logo on team benches and its product in giant containers on the sidelines? There's just no way to know.

This is where many social media marketers get caught in a trap. They're expected to know the ROI of a tweet or blog post. Ain't gonna happen. I'll get into this in more

detail in the chapter on measurement, but if you're in a job requiring you to use organic social media as a quick fix to boost sales, you're being set up to fail.

Social media marketing through content and engagement is primarily part of a brand marketing initiative. Social media advertising is primarily direct marketing. You probably need both.

Confusing these marketing approaches can ruin the credibility of marketing professionals and make them seem disconnected from business reality. Still, measuring brand marketing often comes down to faith instead of hard numbers, and many business leaders hate that.
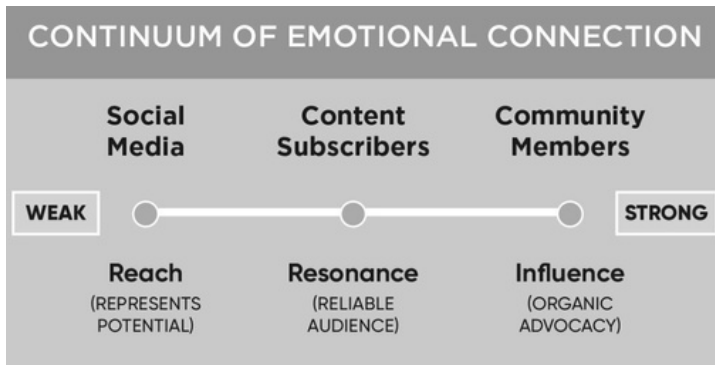
Social media marketing success often comes down to company culture. Do you have a leadership team who believes in branding? Will they trust you to navigate a customer culture that might be influenced by TikTok memes, even if the leadership team doesn't understand it?

Let's move to another aspect of how social media works in the world today. I'm about to grant you a formidable superpower. Let's consider social media marketing in a new way: as the onramp to community.

## The new role of social media

In the digital world, out customers and potential customers inhabit an emotional continuum that should be the obsession of every

marker. Let's dissect this:

**CONTINUUM OF EMOTIONAL CONNECTION**

| Social Media | Content Subscribers | Community Members |
|---|---|---|
| **Reach** (REPRESENTS POTENTIAL) | **Resonance** (RELIABLE AUDIENCE) | **Influence** (ORGANIC ADVOCACY) |

WEAK ———○————————○————————○——— STRONG

A **social media follower** is a weak relational link. Social networks are effective at increasing participation by lessening the level of effort that participation requires. It takes no effort to click a "like" button, for example. But it takes more investment to act on a person's influence and buy a book, show up at a store, or contribute to a charity.

In his New Yorker article entitled "Small Change," Malcolm Gladwell noted that the Facebook page of the Save Darfur Coalition had 1.3 million members who donated an average of an embarrassing nine cents apiece.

In other words, Facebook activism succeeds not by motivating people to make a real sacrifice but by motivating them to do the things that people do when they are not motivated enough to make a real sacrifice. Like click on a "like" button.

As a business leader, you must have realistic expectations about what can be accomplished through your company's social media followers, and you should be wary of any consultant promising to deliver big financial results in a short period of time.

As we'll see later in the book, there are many corporate benefits of social media including HR and customer service. But for many getting into social media marketing for the first time, it can feel like you're standing on the beach, throwing a message in a bottle into the ocean -- an exercise in hope.

Having said that, building your social media followers is still amazing and important because it represents *potential*. Anybody following you on a social platform is a candidate to transition to the next level on the continuum, an audience of subscribers.

## The Audience

**The second stage in this emotional continuum is the audience.** Ideally, as we reach our social media followers with great content, they become involved enough to subscribe to our blog, podcast, video series, etc. An audience has a significantly higher level of emotional connection and represents reliable connectivity. By subscribing to your organization's content, a person opts-in to your message and allows you to market to them. Rather than relying on the "hope" that somebody sees your social media post, you now have direct, reliable insight into who is connected to you and how often. Over time, an audience can become passionate fans,

advocates, and customers.

A few years ago, I tried an experiment. I asked my social media audience to donate money to support a favorite charity - a group that connects mentors to inner-city children. I knew that asking for money on the Internet is a notoriously difficult proposition because of the weak relational links! But I tried it anyway.

I wrote a blog post revealing a personal story of my work with one at-risk child and asked, entirely through social media, for a donation to support the sponsoring charity. I was surprised at the success—I raised more than $6,000 in one week! This seems impressive, but the data revealed a sobering truth.

My blog post was shared more than 750 times … but only 92 people made a donation. This means more than 600 people encouraged others to donate … without donating anything themselves (weak relational links!).

Of the 92 people who donated, 80 were part of my blog audience. The average donation of my strong-link blog audience friends was $65. The average donation of my weak-link social media connections was $15.

And it gets worse.

A couple of social media heavyweights with more than 100,000 followers (and one with more than 500,000 followers!) pitched in to spread the word and

raise awareness for the charity. I estimated they generated more than 3 million social media impressions. The number of donations this intense activity generated: ONE.

The "celebrity influencer" conversion rate on Twitter was one out of 3 million possible impressions. Clearly, not all social media fans and followers are created equal. Your true influence and power aren't with a social media following. It's with a content-based audience.

Audiences are vitally important. But this is where most businesses are stuck — they haven't moved beyond content and the audience-level emotion of the continuum to the ultimate step – community.

### Community is the ultimate connection

**A community** represents the uppermost level of emotional alignment and commitment. It transcends a cult of personality — an audience following a leader or brand image — and becomes a self-sustaining entity.

GWI, one of my favorite resources for research, asked social media users and online community members how each platform made them feel. There was a profound difference in the community members how each platform made them feel. There was a profound difference in the level of trust and commitment in communities versus social media, including the ability to have meaningful conversations, earn respect, and feel appreciation. Safe communities allow members to escape the judgment of the internet and explore difficult ideas without the fear of getting flamed.

Community also unleashes an entirely new level of customer economic benefits, including co-created products, market insight, real-time communication flow, and much more. This is the ultimate customer connection. The bond is so strong that the community can *become the business* and other marketing expenditures could be reduced or suspended — a dream state for any marketing strategy.

Here's an example of how this might work. There's a family-owned bakery in Houston called Dessert Gallery. The business has a growing and loyal Facebook community of more than 5,000 fans. A research study by Rice University found that this social media community was providing profound benefits to the bakery:
- 36 percent more visits than non-Facebook customers
- 45 percent more of their dining budget is spent at the bakery
- 33 percent spent more at the bakery than at other restaurants
- Greater emotional attachment to the brand

The owner successfully uses her Facebook page to gain

marketing insight, address customer problems, communicate promotions, and get feedback on new product ideas.

For this bakery, social media isn't simply another place to run an ad. It's a place to connect, learn, and build emotional bonds in a community that leads to customer loyalty.

Think of this emotional continuum model like a traditional Customer Relationship Management (CRM) strategy. In CRM, a marketing effort aims at moving customers from awareness to consideration and then on to a purchase, loyalty, and advocacy. A marketing strategy based on emotional empowerment through community is more effective than the hope-based marketing systems we rely on today.

Moving customers from follower to audience to community is a process customers will actually embrace!

This is the next step as you awake from your social media slumber. Publishing content on social media is not just a sales or marketing strategy. **It's the beginning of a process that leads to community.**

The purpose of this book is not to pontificate about community and its role in the future of marketing.

That's why I wrote *Belonging to the Brand: Why Community is the Last Great Marketing Strategy.*

If you're ready to take a deep dive into community strategy this is a great resource.

Let's cover one more idea about how social media works in the marketing world today.

## The customer is the marketer

Landmark research from McKinsey revealed just how dramatically consumer behavior has flipped since the beginning of the internet. The company found that on average, two-thirds of the touchpoints during the evaluation phase of a purchase involve *human-driven marketing activities* like internet reviews, social media conversations, and word-of-mouth recommendations from friends, family, and online experts.

Let that sink in for a moment. *Two-thirds of your marketing … is occurring without you.*

This suggests an entirely new mindset for successful marketing. Instead of pushing our messages into the world, we need to earn our way into that two-thirds by creating something that is so amazing, so unmissable, so conversational that people can't wait to share it with their friends.

A common term for this is UGC – User Generated Content.

Here's a fun example of how this works. I visited a barbecue restaurant in Virginia, and right smack in the middle of the restaurant was a 15-foot-tall fiberglass pig in a tie-dye tee shirt. It wasn't a very big place, so this pig was the center of attention!

I asked the owner, "What's the story with the pig?" He replied, "Paid $1,500 for it. That's my entire marketing program."

And indeed, it was. Upon finishing a meal, most customers couldn't resist posing with the pig for a photo, presumably to share somewhere on social media. I did, too. That, my friends, is UGC.

Placing a big pig in the middle of your store is an invitation to share your story – but only if you deliver the goods. You must have delicious food at a fair price, great service, clean restrooms, and convenient parking. If you accomplish all that, the pig is a visual reminder for customers to share their experience.

In a world where our customers have the accumulated knowledge of humanity in the palm of their hand, they expect something more from marketers. They don't want to be spammed, interrupted, and manipulated.

We're moving inexorably toward a subscription-driven, human-driven, emotion-driven, ad-free, funnel-free, loyalty-free world … and the alarm bells for marketers are ringing.

The customers expect more.

The customers are in control.

The customers are the marketers. Let's help them do their job.

UGC is social media's greatest gift to the marketing world.

*Author: Mark-Schaefer*

Mark W. Schaefer is a globally-recognized author, keynote speaker, futurist, and business consultant who blogs at {grow} — one of the top five marketing blogs of the world. He teaches graduate marketing classes at Rutgers University and has written 10 best-selling books. Mark's new book Belonging to the Brand: Why Community is the Last Great Marketing Strategy describes an essential new path to connect to customers in the modern digital world.

His many global clients include Pfizer, Cisco, Dell, Adidas, and the US Air Force. He has been a keynote speaker at prestigious events all over the world, including SXSW, Marketing Summit Tokyo, and the Institute for International and European Affairs. Mark has appeared as a guest on media channels such as CNN, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, and CBS News.
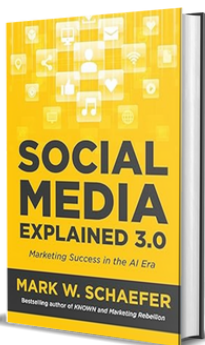


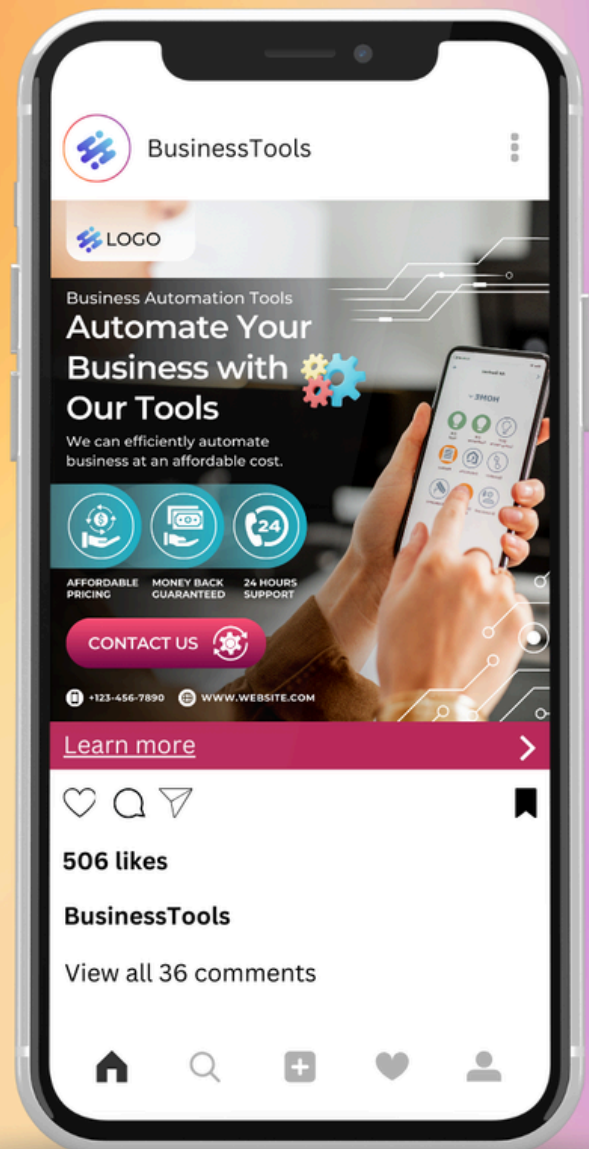**Learn more & purchase Mark's book**

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# Six Steps to Creating CAB-envy

## By: Nichole Hinton

Imagine pulling together some of the greatest minds you have in your customer base. They get together, discuss your organization's initiatives while working to help improve your products and/or services and by the way... they also become your biggest advocates. Sounds like a dream, right?

Customer Advisory Boards (CABs) have been around a long time and when curated and managed properly, they can still be your company's best "secret weapon" to long-term growth.

What is a CAB? It is an executive-level "advisory" group that meets once a quarter, through a two-year commitment, to support an organization of which they have made an investment in. Usually, those invited to the CAB are customers of good standing, eager to support future growth, and are great partners with your organization. This is NOT an account-saving program.

Below, I am including the "quick and dirty" of how to build one. Having built several in my day, there's an easier way to go about it, especially when there are so many tools at your disposal. So, let's dive in!

### Step 1: Identifying a Sponsor & an Owner

As with any major customer-facing program, an Executive will need to sponsor the CAB and someone will need to own it. What's the difference? An Executive Sponsor ensures the owner gets the right level of executive support, both internally and externally. Typically, future CAB members want to know they have access to execs. As for an owner, they are the ones doing the work of building and maintaining the program.

### Step 2: Get Internal Buy-off and Establish a Kickoff Date

Even if you have an executive sponsor, you are asking executives to potentially be involved as well, especially since your CAB members will have access to them. Demonstrating the importance with a great exec sponsor at the helm will make it much easier to start off on the right track?

Why should you establish that date so early? While not required, it holds everyone to a deadline to have it up, running, and on its way to thriving!

### Step 3: Building a Repeatable Structure – Design with a Purpose

If you do not build a repeatable structure up front, you will fail from the beginning. Read that again. The only three things that will evolve are meeting agendas, outcomes and perhaps, a CAB member rotation every couple of years. Otherwise, the structure you build is the structure you follow.

It's also important that it is designed with purpose. This means establishing a goal, what the program is designed to do, listing the major components that need to be built, as well as who will need to be involved. The clearer you are about these, the easier it will be for everyone to support.

What are these major components?
1. **A Charter** – A guiding doc that breaks down roles and responsibilities, requirements, working groups, and anything else that is relevant to the CAB.
2. **Pitch material** – When a customer is invited to join the CAB, it's important to have a suite of materials on what the CAB is/does, what is required of them, what they get out of it,

as well as "why them".

1. **Online group/community** – This is where a community can be an amazing tool to use! It allows for continued conversation, working group work, feedback/ideas harvesting, and documentation collections.
2. **CAB Member Tracker** – This will be your "cheat sheet" for all things customer-related, including attendance tracking.
3. Meeting/Working Group templates – Having all of your meeting deck templates, post-meeting note templates, and email templates ready to go make it a lot easier to pop in information!
4. **Meeting/call structure** – Make sure to identify how many meetings you have a year (usually once a quarter) for 1-1.5 hours; where they will be located (at least one in-person per year); and should also include a time-bound breakdown of an agenda for each call.
5. **Working Group structure** – Working groups may require additional meetings/calls and will be structured a bit differently than a normal quarterly meeting, since you are tackling specific tracks of work.

… and the list can go on from there.

## Step 4: Recruitment

With all of the hard leg work out of the way, it's time to start inviting! But who do you actually select to invite? Below is the list I use when selecting CAB members to invite (note: you will want 8-10 members, which means you need to invite 15-20):

1. Title of VP or above.
2. At least one full year of being a customer.
3. Enthusiasm for the organization and for what they have invested in.
4. Willingness to be an advocate.
5. Is on the current version of your product(s) or uses a fair amount of your services.
6. Their account is in good standing and has already proved to be a great "partner".

Notice how I left out spend, industry, and company size. While they can help represent the breadth of your organization's customer base, those are tertiary to creating a great CAB. In fact, I don't even use them unless I need to whittle the list down more.

Now that you have your list, it's time to contact them! I use the approach of executive relationships first, sales/CS reps second, and program owner third. Since it's a "VIP-level" program, this is your best bet to getting the yesses!

## Step 5: Kickoff

It's time to put all of that hard work to the test! How did the meeting go? What were the outcomes? Were initiatives identified to be worked on in working groups? Did members volunteer for those groups? When you have answered these, make sure to clean up any notes, send out the appropriate documentation, and get to step 6!

## Step 6: Keeping the Momentum Going in the Community

One of the hardest parts about the program is what happens AFTER the meeting, whether that is a quarterly meeting or a working group session. It's why a social platform, such as a community, is a great way to keep all that great work going! Some tips for ensuring your efforts aren't lost until the next call:

1. Set up a general community space for all CAB members - This will include any general CAB materials.
2. Set up Working Group community spaces for each CAB-led initiative – This allows conversations to continue in between meetings; your own (select) colleagues have access to feedback and are able to support where needed; and you to keep better track of how much progress is being made.
3. Make sure these groups are private - Other parts of your community should not have access them.
4. Harvest any and all ideas once a month - This is crucial for working group calls, quarterly calls, as well as internal review.
5. Track harvested ideas – The CAB has chosen to invest their time in your organization and that means they want to see progress. Tracking these ideas and the progress of them, will help keep momentum within the program!

Remember, CABs are only as great as the work you put into them but when done well, will pave the way for the future success of your organization!

Need more assistance or have more questions on how to get started? Click here.
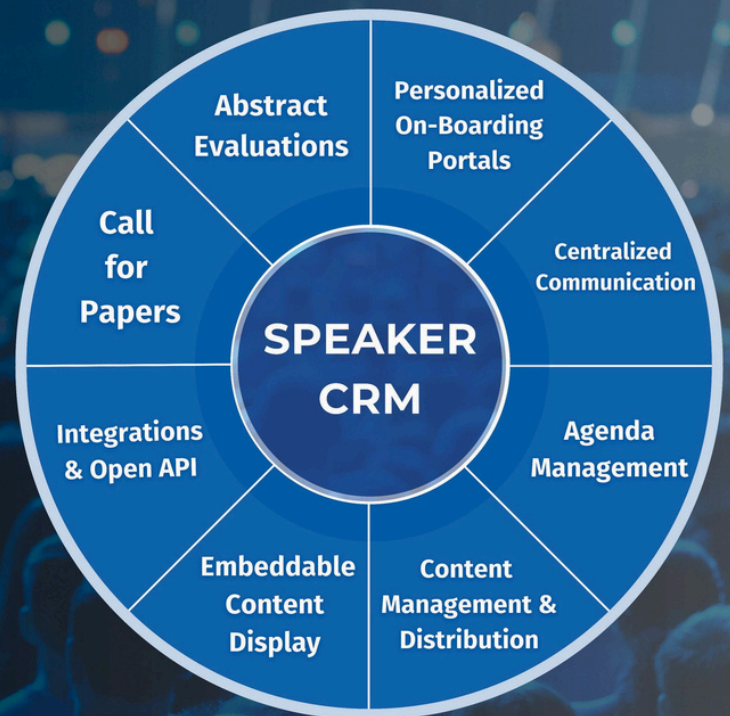
*Author: Nichole Hinton, CEO @ N&M Consulting*

Nichole Hinton is an award-winning speaker, mentor and practitioner of customer experience and operations. Having been in tech for over 25 years, Nichole has had the honor and privilege of working with some of the most notable leaders in the world to solve challenges in the areas of sales, marketing, and customer experience & operations. Over her tenure, her solutions and programs have resulted in nearly $500mm in additional identified and realized revenue, an average 92% renewal rate, an average 95% upgrade rate for SaaS-based companies, and the curation of Fortune 500 Executive Customer Advisory Boards.  She currently owns and operates N&M Consulting - a consulting firm focused on marketing and CX.

# The intrapreneurial community manager: Fostering innovation and growth by Tzufit Herling

In today's fast-changing world, community managers play a unique role. They navigate emerging platforms, evolving policies, and the challenges of hybrid connection, fostering engagement in both online and offline environments.

Having spent a decade in community management, as well as working with entrepreneurs from different industries, I've witnessed the power of entrepreneurial thinking within this field. This article explores the concept of the community manager as entrepreneur and how cultivating this mindset can lead to personal growth and thriving communities.

## What is an intrapreneur?

An intrapreneur is an employee who operates as an entrepreneur within an existing company. They possess a creative, driven mindset and are tasked with developing innovative ideas or projects. Intrapreneurs benefit from the resources and structure of the organization while fostering growth and progress like their entrepreneurial counterparts. At its core, an entrepreneurial mindset is a way of thinking that equips you to turn ideas into action. It's a combination of specific behaviors, attitudes, and values that make you proactive and resourceful.

Entrepreneurial thinkers are open to new ideas, develop critical thinking, and stay resilient in the face of challenges. As emphasized in this article, an entrepreneurial mindset isn't limited to starting a business. It's a powerful approach to every life aspect that can fuel personal growth, career advancement, and effective problem-solving.

## How do intrapreneurs contribute to their companies?

Let's take inspiration through a brief look at some of the daily products and services used by people all around the world, and why we should thank intrapreneurs for inventing them:

**Gmail by Google:** Google's famous "20% time" policy allows employees to dedicate a portion of their workweek to passion projects. While you may not know the name, Paul Buchheit, he's the intrapreneur behind Gmail, a game-changer in the email space, thanks to this policy.

**Post-It Note by 3M:** Spencer Silver, a scientist at 3M, developed a weak adhesive that stuck lightly to surfaces but didn't bond tightly to them. For years, Silver promoted his invention, but it lacked a clear practical application, leaving it underutilized. Luckily, Art Fry, another 3M employee, realized its potential for use as bookmarks and note-taking, leading to the creation of the iconic Post-It Note.

**Soothe 'N' Chew by Nestle:** Stéphanie Daru, a product development expert at Nestle, came up with a new idea while watching her seven-month-old daughter begin teething and biting on everything around the house. Daru realized that creating an all-natural and edible teething treat would be an excellent solution for babies to chew on and alleviate pain during the teething process. That's how Soothe 'N' Chew was created.

## The intrapreneurial community manager skill set

**Here are some skills that are common to intrapreneurial community managers:**
**Strategic Thinking:** Move beyond daily tasks and think long-term growth for the community.
**Business Acumen:** Understand key metrics, ROI, and how the community contributes to business goals.
**Proactivity:** Be a self-starter, a person who actively takes initiative and anticipates challenges. The intrapreneur CMs don't wait to be told what to do, but instead think ahead, solve problems,

and look for ways to improve themselves and the company.

**Innovation & Experimentation:** Develop fresh ideas, renew processes, and test new approaches to drive community engagement and achieve the desired business goals.

**Risk-taking:** Changing long-term organizational structures or mechanisms, developing new projects, and suggesting new ideas requires taking risks.

## What can you do to foster your intrapreneur mindset?

### Shift from "implementer" to "owner"

Move beyond simply executing tasks and take ownership of your community's success. Analyze data, identify trends, and proactively propose solutions that address community needs and contribute to organizational goals.

### Become an innovation master

Cultivate a constant lookout for opportunities to improve. Explore new tools and platforms, brainstorm fresh ideas for engagement, and identify areas where your community processes can be streamlined.

### Embrace calculated risks

Don't be afraid to experiment with new initiatives, even if they might fail. Develop a data-driven approach to testing your ideas, starting with small-scale pilots that can be easily adjusted or scaled up based on the results.

### Stay ahead of the curve

Be an active listener within your community and stay informed about industry trends. Network with other community professionals, participate in relevant conferences, and leverage social media to stay on top of emerging best practices.

### Develop your Intrapreneurial toolkit

Continuously expand your skill set. Take online courses or workshops on topics like data analysis, project management, and creative problem-solving.

Developing an entrepreneurial mindset is an ongoing task. Taking ownership, embracing risks, and thinking "out of the box" is not only challenging but also rewarding! You'll increase your power to influence organizational processes and be able to enlarge your daily work impact.

### Boost your entrepreneurial mindset: A quick exercise for ideation

Stuck with a challenge or looking to increase your creativity?

Open a blank virtual document or take a paper and pen, making sure to be in a quiet environment without distractions. Set a timer to 10 minutes and write down all the ideas you want to tackle in this challenge.

The idea behind the exercise is to come up with as many ideas as you can, even if they are totally dumb, not reliable or require an enormous budget to execute. Yes, while we usually embrace quality over quantity, in this exercise it's the opposite. Don't try to evaluate your ideas, just write them. You'll be surprised by the amount of new ideas you'll generate!

Once the time is finished, review your ideas and choose the ones that are worth developing.

## The intrapreneurial community manager in action

By proactively seeking solutions, fostering innovation, and advocating for their community, community managers can act as intrapreneurs and significantly impact their organization's success. Here's how you can put your intrapreneurial spirit to work within your current role:

### Identifying community needs

Great community managers are aware of their members' desires. Running a customer community? You can analyze survey data and forum discussions to identify pain points with a new product feature, propose creating video tutorials or hosting live Q&A sessions to address knowledge gaps.

Alternatively, if your community is targeting employees, it is worth noticing employees who request collaboration on specific project areas. Create a sub-community dedicated to knowledge sharing and resource exchange for those specific project types.

By understanding your members' needs, you can propose innovative initiatives, like new content

formats, events, or sub-communities that address unmet needs and boost engagement.

**Experimenting with engagement**

Experiment with fresh ideas to spark conversation and build a stronger community. This could involve piloting new social media strategies focused on user-generated content (such as launching a photo contest with the community's favorite product), hosting unique online events (such as a virtual escape room challenge to boost team building and communication skills), or implementing creative initiatives such as regular mentoring sessions or an ambassador program.

**Building strategic partnerships**

Build strategic partnerships by leveraging your network to forge collaborations with external organizations and industry experts and influencers. This entrepreneurial spirit can lead to exciting collaborations, like co-hosting webinars or offering exclusive member benefits.

If you run an employees community, you may forge a collaboration with the company's HR department to offer exclusive training sessions or mentorship programs with industry leaders for high-performing employees.

**Advocating for the community**

Become a strong advocate for the community's voice within the company. Propose data-driven suggestions that benefit both the community and the organization's goals. This advocacy can lead to product improvements, new features, or enhanced user experience driven by community insights. Identifying recurring challenges can also lead to new solutions, such as streamlining internal processes or implementing new tools based on community suggestions.

> **Boost your entrepreneurial mindset: A quick exercise for problem-solving**
>
> Here's another quick problem-solving technique:
>
> 1. Choose a challenge or a problem.
> 2. Pick a famous figure you admire, from any industry or field – from Hollywood stars to tech entrepreneurs and animated characters. And yes, you can pick your favorite community manager!
> 3. Approach the problem as if you were your chosen famous figure. Ask yourself: What would they do? What actions could they take? Who would they talk to? Putting yourself in the shoes of another person (real or fictional) allows you to break your own boundaries and come up with new ideas.

## How embracing the intrapreneurial mindset benefits you?

Community managers who regularly embrace the intrapreneurial mindset can expect several advantages.

First, you can **increase job satisfaction and growth opportunities.** By taking initiative and driving innovation, you'll find your work more stimulating and impactful. This proactive approach can lead to exciting new projects and leadership opportunities within your role.

Additionally, you'll significantly improve your **self-development and career**. As an intrapreneurial community manager, you'll hone your skills in identifying needs, brainstorming solutions, and building partnerships. These skills are highly sought after in today's job market and will translate well to other roles within your current company or future endeavors you might pursue.

Moreover, by fostering a thriving community that contributes to the organization's success, you'll gain **organizational recognition** from leadership. This visibility can lead to promotions, increased responsibilities, and a stronger position within the company. You may even pave the way for a future transition to other departments that value your entrepreneurial spirit.

> **Boost your entrepreneurial mindset: A quick exercise for overcoming limiting beliefs**
>
> We've shown how intrapreneurs embrace new ideas, test them, and take risks. If you struggle to step outside your

your comfort zone, this exercise can help. Based on Harvard University journaling exercises, this exercise is designed to push you deeper. It may uncover some discomfort, but the growth is worth it.

1. Identify and write down a limiting belief. Choose a belief that hinders you from achieving your goals or executing your ideas.
2. Analyze the belief: What has this belief cost you in the past? How has it negatively affected your work or career? What is it costing you now in your work? What will it cost you after one month, six months, and a year from now?
3. Question your limiting belief: Is it true? Is it accurate? Is this just a story you've been telling yourself? If you still believe it's true, start over.
4. Replace it with a new, empowering belief: Rewrite your old belief with a new, empowering one.
5. Remind yourself of the new belief whenever you feel limited.

## What are the benefits of intrapreneurial community managers for their organizations?

Intrapreneurial community

managers act as a bridge between the organization and its customer base or employees (depending on the community type), fostering innovation, engagement, and growth for both. If you're a stakeholder, here's why you should encourage your CMs to embrace an intrapreneurial spirit:

- **Win loyal employees:** Employees who have the freedom to suggest ideas, take risks, and experiment within their role will likely be more satisfied. This satisfaction translates to increased motivation, higher productivity, and lower turnover, all of which benefit the organization.
- **Contributing to innovation and growth:** They drive fresh ideas and initiatives within the community, leading to potential new products, services, or features that can fuel business growth.
- **Stronger community engagement:** Their proactive approach fosters a vibrant and engaged community that translates to loyal customers, brand advocates, and valuable user feedback.
- **Enhanced strategic partnerships:** Their ability to build connections with external groups can lead to valuable collaborations that bring new resources and opportunities to the organization.
- **Improved brand reputation:** By fostering a positive and active community, intrapreneurial community managers enhance the organization's image and reputation.

In conclusion, organizational intrapreneurship shifts the employee from the circle of concern (What will be with me?) to the circle of influence (What can I do?), as Stephen Covey stated in his famous book, "7 Habits of Highly Effective People." By encouraging your community managers to embrace this mindset, you can open a wealth of benefits for your employees and your organization.

## Small Steps, Big Impact: Starting Your Intrapreneurial Journey

As professionals, it's crucial for community managers to adopt entrepreneurial skills that will help them navigate, provide value to their members, and lead thriving communities.

Being an intrapreneurial community manager doesn't require inventing the next Gmail or Post-it Note (though dreaming big is always encouraged!).

You can start with small actions that benefit your daily community operations or enhance member engagement. How? Choose one skill you'd like to develop or a community challenge you want to tackle. Then, approach it with a fresh, intrapreneurial perspective.

**Author: Tzufit Herling, Community Consultant**

Tzufit Herling is driving organizational transformation through communities and training programs.
She is a consultant with more than a decade of experience in the content field, working with organizations, entrepreneurs, and businesses around the globe in online and in-person platforms. The creator and owner of Connecteur, a certified Meta Community Management's company, Tzufit provides a consultation for community development, designs training programs, and serves as a lecturer and facilitator.



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# Building a Customer-Centric Culture from the Ground Up: A Chat with Kristi Faltorusso
## Interviewed by Adrian Speyer

*We are so honored to have Kristi Faltorusso, Chief Customer Officer at ClientSuccess, on the cover on the latest edition of our magazine. It was an absolute pleasure to learn more about her journey and the secrets of building a truly customer-centric culture.*

*This exclusive interview offers a deep dive into the mind of a Chief Customer Officer, revealing Kristi's strategies for fostering a customer-centric culture, empowering teams, and driving business success. You'll discover her unique approach to:*

- *Building a culture of customer obsession*
- *Empowering teams to deliver exceptional experiences*
- *Driving sustainable business growth through customer loyalty*

### A Journey from Long Island to Leadership

Kristi grew up in Long Island, New York, where she still lives today. After graduating Summa Cum Laude with a BFA in Public Relations from LIU, she went on to begin her career in Publishing. She worked for CMP Media where she was an Ad Operations Manager. After years in Marketing roles at CMP, Kristi moved into marketing where she worked at

companies such as PV Media, The Knot, Crains, and AJ Madison.

"I broke into Customer Success in 2012 as a subject matter expert in Search Engine Optimization," she shares. "I had been a customer of Brightedge a couple of times and eventually went to work for them as an Enterprise CSM. In that role I got the chance to work with some of the world's largest brands." This early foray into the field ignited a spark that has guided her trajectory ever since.

Twelve years and five companies later, Kristi has built, scaled and transformed several Customer Success teams at companies like Sisense, BetterCloud and Intellishift. Kristi is currently the Chief Customer Officer at ClientSuccess, a Customer Success Management platform, where she oversees the Support, Services and Success teams.

### Evolution of Customer Success: Embracing Change and Empowering Teams

The customer success landscape has evolved considerably since Kristi's early days, moving from a consultant-driven approach to one focused on empowering customers to achieve their own success. "in early years while

Customer Success was in its infancy, we were very much focused on delivering Customer Success as consultants would, it was extremely consultative and I was operating as an extension of their team, at times even helping them with their work," she explains. "As the industry has matured, there was more emphasis on training, enablement and change management. I was less about 'doing for them' and more about 'empowering them to do for themselves'." This shift in focus is also indicative of Kristi's leadership style, one that values collaboration, knowledge sharing, and empowering her team to reach their full potential.

### A Visionary Leader: Aligning Customer Success with Business Goals

As Chief Customer Officer, Kristi's responsibilities extend beyond her team's performance to encompass the overall health and success of ClientSuccess. "My priorities have shifted from my teams' performance to the overall performance of the company," she explains. "While I still pay close attention to our specific KPIs, I will often lean into opportunities and initiatives that will serve the greater good of the business." This strategic mindset is critical for

ensuring the customer success function aligns with the organization's broader goals.

Kristi's leadership philosophy is rooted in servant leadership and leading from the front.

## "I will never ask my team to do something I wouldn't do myself," she emphasizes.

"I am happy to roll up my sleeves and do whatever it takes to get the job done." This hands-on approach fosters trust and respect, allowing for open communication and a culture of collaboration. As Kristi notes "I believe folks prefer to have change happen with them and not to them."

Finally, a core part of leadership is also building teams. As she shared "I focus on diversity of thought and believe in hiring folks who are high performers in areas I am not as strong to ensure we are a well-rounded organization."

### Cultivating a Customer-Centric Culture: Empowering Teams and Democratizing Data

As Kristi believes fostering a customer-centric culture is a cornerstone for success, we wanted to know more on how she makes this happen. "The best way to facilitate a customer-centric culture is to help all of the cross-functional teams in the business understand the direct impact they have on the customers' outcomes, retention, growth and advocacy,"

she says, To achieve this, Kristi implements various programs and initiatives designed to bring cross-functional teams into the customer journey. For example:

- Bring Customer Success into the sales process or facilitate a referral or reference program to help accelerate the deal cycle, close rate and deal value
- Facilitate a Product Advisory Board with key customers to provide feedback on the roadmap, share product ideas and weigh in on industry direction
- Lead the Success Story program for the Marketing team where we have a process to alert Marketing when a customer has a measurable result that we can design a story around.

Of course, this comes with balancing the competing priorities of different departments, which can sometimes be a challenge. "Sometimes teams have competing priorities and due to this we can at times feel like we are rowing in opposite directions," she admits.

To overcome these challenges, Kristi believes in democratizing customer data, as she shared "I believe that the best organizations democratize customer data so all functions can learn and create better experiences, better engagements and more importantly better products and services."

### The Power of Collaboration: Breaking Down Silos and Fostering Synergy

The real secret sauce though, according to Kristi, is the importance of breaking down silos because collaboration is key to creating a cohesive customer journey. To make this happen she promotes regular cross-functional team meetings, joint goal setting, and weekly leadership meetings to ensure alignment and communication. She also encourages collaboration at the individual level, allowing team members to work together across departments. "Allowing and encouraging individual contributors to work together helps to break down barriers," she explains.

Here is just a quick example of how she has the departments work together at ClientSuccess:

**Marketing:**
- Collaborate on Success Stories with customers and the marketing team; CS identifies these wins and shares with Marketing to document and share
- Advocacy Program Management - identify which customers are willing and able to serve as advocates and manage which programs they are fit for; Success Stories, speaking engagements, review submissions etc.

**Sales:**
- Identify and manage customer references for easy reporting so sales can quickly find the customers that would be available to speak with prospects
- CS in the sales process - support a fluid process to help sales close deals, reduce the cycle timeline and increase ARR

**Product:**
- Beta Program management where we have a way to manage customers who are a fit to participate in beta programs
- Customer Feedback sessions - Create a small cohort of customers who are willing to review and provide feedback to product based on what they are working on

**Support:**
- Ticket analysis to uncover opportunities to create new content to reduce ticket volume
- Manage 1 to Many sessions like our Masterclass Webinar series that focuses on training and enabling customers at scale so they can make better use of the product which helps with ticket volume

**Finance:**
- Support the Finance team with payment follow up as needed should payments be delayed

## Customer Success Strategies in the Digital Age

The digital age demands a customer success strategy that is adaptable, innovative, and centered around data-driven insights. As she shares, there is a quick recipe for success. "Strong product that is easy to use, intuitive and... content, content, content!" Kristi emphasizes. She believes that creating a wealth of content across different mediums is crucial for addressing diverse customer needs and providing support at scale. The rise of AI will further transform the customer success landscape, necessitating a shift towards efficiency and leveraging technology to automate repetitive tasks and generate predictive insights.

Also, a key element of the digital age is tracking and measuring the impact of customer success initiatives. It is essential for demonstrating value and driving continuous improvement. Kristi believes you need to look at both leading and lagging indicators to gauge success.

According to her playbook these are the leading and lagging indicators you should pay critical attention to

**Leading indicators:**
- Clear SMART goals defined for each customer
- Measurable Result that is achieved during onboarding
- Regular customer engagement - Engagement does not need to be a call/Zoom; it can be any way the customer is engaging with your business - community, support, CSM calls, survey results etc.
- Product usage and adoption
- Customer review on Q2 or other online sites
- Executive relationships

**Lagging indicators**
- Retention
- Growth - Upsell, expansion or cross-sell
- Advocacy - willingness to participate in any/all advocacy activities

## Looking Ahead: Embracing the Future of Customer Success

Talking to Kristi, it's clear the future of customer success is promising, with AI playing an increasingly crucial role in enhancing efficiency, personalization, and predictive insights. "Customer Success teams will focus on sustainability; organizations will lean into AI to help with productivity, proactivity, personalization, prioritization and predictive insights," she predicts. This shift will allow human teams to focus on higher-value tasks, delivering more strategic and personalized customer experiences. This is why she feels the future of full stack CSMs evolving into more specialized roles.

We know changes is constant, so we asked what her secret is in staying ahead of the curve. Kristi shared that she embraces a combination of networking, social media engagement, and podcasts. "I am fortunate to have a strong personal network of some of the best and brightest in the industry. I spend time speaking with them about their thoughts, ideas and experiences to help guide me," she reveals.

Furthermore, she shared "With the fast pace of innovation and change, I can't rely on books as they are often outdated as soon as they are published. I find that social media channels are the best medium for staying up to date." This is also why she loves Podcasts: "Podcasts are also wonderful. There are new podcasts popping up every day that focus on all different aspects of business and leadership."

By tapping into connections, and combining with her insatiable thirst for knowledge, she remains

at the forefront of the customer success landscape – which shows in her frequent writing contributions and her own Podcast, the "She's So Suite" Podcast (editor note, not just a plug – but truthfully a great listen for anyone interested in leadership).

**Advice for Aspiring Customer Success Professionals**

As someone so accomplished, we couldn't wait to get her advice for those seeking to enter or advance their careers in customer success. She urges anyone to "lead with a learning mindset." As she continued to share "CSMs who are intellectually curious perform significantly better than those that do not. Ask questions - ask your customer more questions, ask questions in meetings, bring questions to your 1:1 meeting with your manager." She also emphasizes the importance of networking and seeking out mentors to gain insights and guidance.

For those aspiring to leadership roles, Kristi advises focusing on driving impact, developing business acumen, and honing sales skills.

**"Don't chase titles and money - chase opportunities to drive impact," she shares.**

These words serve as a powerful reminder that true success lies in making a meaningful contribution and leaving a positive mark on the world.

**Kristi Faltorusso, CCO of ClientSuccess**

Kristi Faltorusso is a Customer Success and Digital Marketing leader with over 20 years of experience. As a passionate customer advocate, keen on evaluating business needs, Kristi builds and scales customer success teams focused on creative problem-solving to drive success for customers across the globe.

Presently, as the Chief Customer Officer at ClientSuccess, a leading provider of Customer Success Management solutions, Kristi spearheads Customer Success, Technical Support, and Consulting initiatives. In her current capacity, she continues to drive transformative outcomes, aligning her passion for customer-centric strategies with a commitment to delivering unparalleled value.

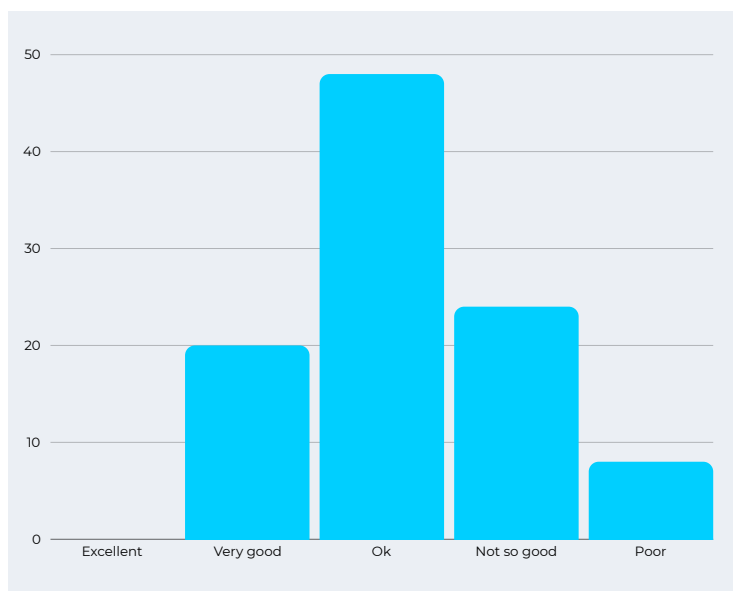# Six customer marketing motions that could be improved by a healthier customer contact database

## By: Irwin Hipsman

The foundation of any customer marketing and advocacy program is your customer contact database, which according to Marketing Sherpa, 2% of it decays monthly. At the four customer marketing practices I initiated, a key early task was cleaning up the database to make it much more effective than it was.

Issues include outdated and inaccurate information, misspellings, duplicates, blank fields, poor geo location, and the wrong information type (email address in the title field). This results in the inability to properly segment, decreased open rates, and increased opt-out rates.

We recently ran a survey of customer marketing professionals asking, "How would you describe the health of your customer contact database?" The results were not good!

These are your customers, and having an OK or worse database can't be acceptable, especially when growth from existing customers is such a priority. Respondents wrote: "Keeps me awake at night and the mistakes are embarrassing" and "Customer data hygiene (or lack thereof, actually) has been a consistent theme across all of the positions I've held in the last 8 years".

contacts, etc. will leave their company. You can quickly determine about 60% of them on your own if you focus on it, but 40% will slip thru the cracks for months. CSM's need to know as there may be unused seats which should be filled, or utilization slipped due to people leaving. Account managers need to know as a renewal may be impacted.

Equally important is customer lifecycle marketing typically ends when a customer leaves their company. Either a salesperson holds onto their name or the company waits for the former customer contact to raise their hand. Nurturing former customers is a source of warm leads whose business could be accelerated by 6-9 months. At Forrester, I launched a very successful former customer repeat business (alumni) program which got stood up in 2 months using existing processes and resources.



Here are 6 ways your company could be impacted by an unhealthy customer database:

**1-Contacts that are no longer customers**
On an annual basis approximately 20% of your users, seat holders, key

**2-Decrease your GDPR and state email privacy compliance risk**
All too often, the location of where the contract was signed, or the company HQ is located is the proxy for where contacts live. Where the person lives,

determines the privacy regulations for that contact. This becomes a compliance issue as regions (Europe), countries (Canada and Germany), and states (California plus others) enact privacy regulations. Check out current state regulations here.

3-Crisis Communications
This is the one that is your employment insurance policy. Imagine your CEO sends you a note at 9am and says, we have a crisis or a major announcement and I need to communicate an already written message to the CEO's key contacts inviting them to connect with him/her and another one coming from someone else on the executive team with more of a FYI message. First, could you generate that list and can you get the CEO's email out the door by 4pm?

**4-Upsell more effectively**
Titles decay faster than just about anything else. The title the person had when they were first identified by sales or received their login credentials is probably still their title in your database. Segmentation and upsell motions will be improved by messaging based on level within the organization.

You may have noticed that I did not write upsell and cross sell in the heading. Anytime I hear an executive use them interchangeably it probably means they do not know the difference between post sales cross-sell and upsell. Essentially, upsell is selling to your existing

buyer more of what they purchased or a new feature. Cross-sell is selling to new buyers at an existing company. This could be another division or department. Cross-sell is actually closer to a new logo sale, except legal, security and procurement should be easier and internal referrals are the best.

**5- Increase attendance at your in-person events.**
Similar to geographic compliance, knowing where your customers live will enable you to be more targeted when inviting customers to events. I used to work for a Swiss company and the vendor assumed I lived in Switzerland to the point that I received their newsletter in German.

**6- Improve email open rates**
Many customer marketing teams under report email open rates due to bad data. Recently, at Forrester,

I was able to improve open rates by 5% just by cleaning up the database and doing better segmentation. This helps make better decisions as to when to best use email and/or in-app messaging.

**Is anybody responsible for the health of your customer contact database.**

In the aforementioned survey we also asked, "Whose responsibility is it to keep the database as accurate as possible"?

At most companies, various silos have a piece of the puzzle with nobody looking at the big picture, while the data continues to decay. Generally,

- **Marketing Ops** is focused on the prospect database. They maintain the structure of the customer database, but not
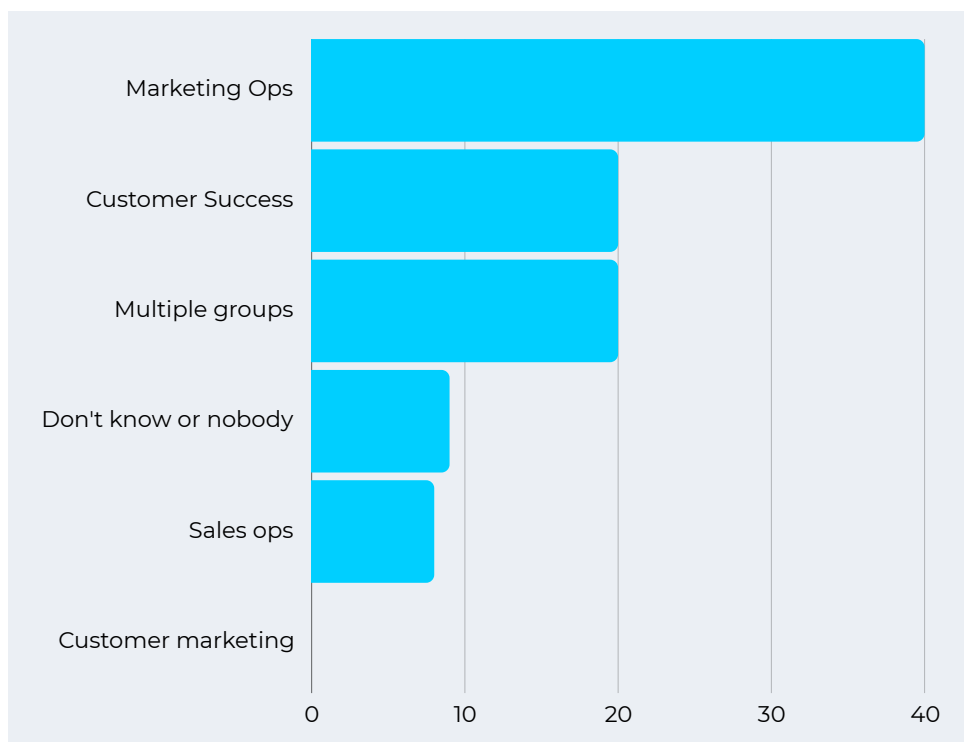
the actual data.

- Customer Success manually updates information for their VIP contacts, but data hygiene is not a KPI.
- Sales adds contacts during pre-sales, and this is usually the messiest.
- Customer Marketing is focused on acts of advocacy (references, testimonials, reviews....) and defers to others as this may not be a competency.

Customer Marketing is in the unique position to lean into updating contact data, which will benefit the entire organization (e.g. legal, corporate comms, sales, demand gen, customer success and more). In the short-term, work with CS and Marketing or Rev Ops to determine which data points are important and manageable. This will be the foundation of transforming your customer contact database into an advantage. Then, monthly for some data and quarterly for others, run a report in Excel. Either manually make a few changes in your CRM or make the updates in the spreadsheet for Marketing to bulk upload.

Customer Marketing often struggles to show value. By doing this, you will gain credibility and may build up the capital to suggest some of the more structural database challenges needed to improve customer communications. By spending time with the database, you will also become better and better at understanding the subtleties of your accounts and the advocate persona.

### Irwin Hipsman, Founder of <u>Repetitos</u>

Irwin Hipsman thinks of himself as being tri-lingual. When in sales, he achieved President's Club multiple times, as a customer success leader his teams had a 95%+ renewal rate, and he started up four customer marketing practices. Most recently, as the first Director of Customer Marketing at Forrester, he was most proud of launching a revenue generating customer alumni repeat business program.

In addition to managing 100+ in-person customer user groups, he created a customer awards program that lasted 10+ years at Brainshark, received two Gartner Customer Choice designations from Nexthink, and organized the customer response to a very critical Wall St, Journal front-page article (Crimson Hexagon).
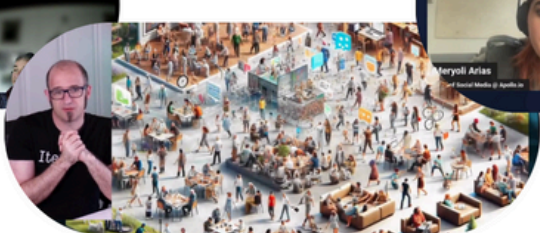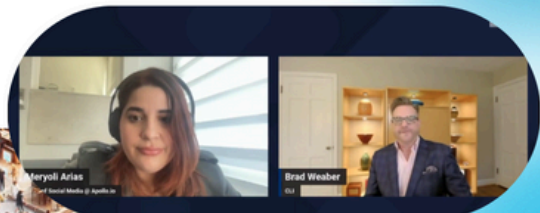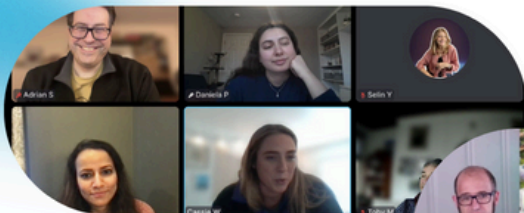


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# Your Breakthrough - 7 Principles To Become The Person You Were Meant To Be
## by Bradwin Jordan

## Chapter 7: Positive Attitude

Do you remember the poem *Don't Quit*? There is a line that says, "When things go wrong, as they sometimes will." That's right—things will go wrong, and when they do, I not only ask you not to quit, but I also ask you to be positive.

Let me make one brief statement about being positive. I am not asking you to bury your head in the sand and pretend things are not challenging. This is not about hiding and hoping it goes away. I understand the damage that can do to a person or group. No, instead, acknowledge the challenge and situation that you are going through. Acknowledge it, set a plan to get through it, and then have a positive attitude while you are executing it. It is not easy at first, and quite frankly, it may never be easy for some people. It is something that you can learn and something that you can improve on.

If you are reading this book, I know you are someone that is already positive or at least you are working on being positive. I said that you can learn to be positive, and I stick by that statement. This is 100% a choice. Out of all of the principles we discussed, I know this one you can implement immediately. This is something that you can change today. That's right—I said you can change it today. It is all about changing your perspective. It's a shift in mindset to positivity. It is an understanding that you can't always control what happens to you, but you are absolutely able to control how you respond to challenges that present themselves.

If you are already a person that is positive and a person that already has joy in all situations, congratulations! I still hope to give you information on how you can build on that positivity. If you are pleased with all areas of positivity in your life, I will provide you with information on how you can help others to learn to be positive. There are a couple of tools that I have used over the years in order to remain positive. I will say that it is generally easier for me in my professional life than it is in my personal life. The key is that I am self-aware enough to be on the lookout for this in my personal life.

One tool that I use is having a key phrase or idea that I recite in my head or aloud, if possible. So, what is a key phrase that can keep you positive? I don't know. That's right—I don't know what can keep you positive, but I can give you ideas of what I use, and I hope it will spark ideas for you. One phrase that I usually recite to myself is, "This, too, shall pass." This phrase has been credited to the poet Edward FitzGerald. The phrase "This, too, shall pass" has enabled me to get past difficult situations in my life. It may not be a fun, catchy phrase, but it works. Life will throw challenges at you; you have the ability to grab that junk and play in it or you can volley it right back to the world and say, "Not today!" That's another phrase you can take from me. It is another phrase that I recite to myself. It is as simple as saying I am not here for the negativity today.

Not today—what a phrase! When you are being tested and you are trying everything you can to be positive, use the phrase "Not today." It is a fun thing to say. Actually, the first time that you say this, you will smile or maybe even laugh out loud as you recall this text.

Now, take a few moments and think about the challenges you have had in your life. More than likely, they did not last forever. Although, I do understand that they can sometimes feel that way.

Moreover, I know some situations can have a lifelong impact. I get all of that. But the phrase still works. Think about the darkest moment of your challenges—how long did they last? Now, compare that to all the positive things that have happened in your life. My hope for you is that the positives outweigh the negatives. If that is not the case, make that change today!

When have I used these phrases? Well, there was a time when I was going through a health issue. I can tell you that it felt like forever. It was a terrible situation for me and caused great stress and anxiety. I started using the phrase, "This, too, shall pass." On my bad days, this phrase helped me get through the immediate panic and look forward to the positive on the other side.

I have had several surgeries over my lifetime. Most, if not all, resulted from playing sports and all required some sort of rehabilitation. Those were difficult times, but I remembered that "This, too, shall pass."

More than twenty years ago, I was fired from a job on baseless grounds, and I could not believe it was happening. I was angry and hurt, but that anger and hurt did not last long. Why? Because that situation and those feelings passed rather quickly. Those emotions passed because I had a positive attitude about the situation. I knew I would move on to a better company and better supervisors. It was a time in my life where I was building my character and this was just a step in that process.

Another tool that I have used on and off for the last ten years is a gratitude journal. I think a journal is essential and it is a game changer. I recommend that you start keeping a gratitude journal. Here is how I use mine: after I wake up in the morning, I write down what I will be thankful for during that day. I know—you might be asking, "How do you know what will happen?" I don't know. What I know is that I am going to be thankful. I am creating a mindset of gratitude, which generally leads to positivity. I usually keep the list to around ten items. I do not ask anyone to write a book every morning. Rather, what I am saying is to start your day with a new sense of positivity. In the evening, I then write down ten things that I am thankful for that happened during the day. It is extremely easy to forget all of the positives of a day. When you write them down in a journal, they will stick in your mind. As I have already mentioned, the mind is a powerful tool.

These evening gratitude notes can be significant items or insignificant items. Their significance doesn't matter; it matters that you remember to be thankful and that helps you keep a positive attitude. Think with me for a minute: how would it look if you started your day being grateful and ended your day being grateful? It would be very difficult not to be positive.

Here are also a couple of bonus tools to use with your gratitude journal. Read your ten items out loud. There is power in the spoken word. There is also power in your brain hearing this gratitude coming out of your mouth. So, for a little extra smile, speak your items out loud in the morning and at night. Another tool is to be thankful throughout the day. When I know that I am dealing with something heavier, I spend my days saying, "Thank you." When my car starts, I say "Thank you" for my transportation. When I am working, I say "Thank you" because I get to come to work. When I eat lunch, I say "Thank you" for the food I'm having. All of this is helping you build a positive mindset. These tools alone can help anyone learn to have a positive attitude.
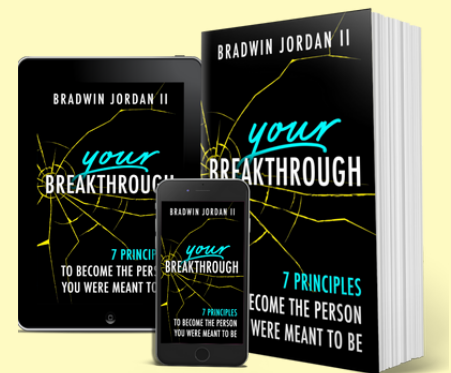
**Bradwin Jordan**
**Speaker, Author, Coach**

From humble beginning to where he is today, Brad has utilized the same principles that he teaches to others in order to be successful. Brad has spent two decades in Talent Acquisition, Service, and Leadership. He is not just an experienced professional in Service and Talent Acquisition, but also a dedicated family man, a keynote speaker, and coach.

For more than twenty years, Brad has been conducting presentations and workshops across the United States. His focus areas include Leadership, Career Development, 7 Principles of Success, Human Resources, and more. Brad is impacting the lives of numerous individuals with his passion for education and personal development.

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