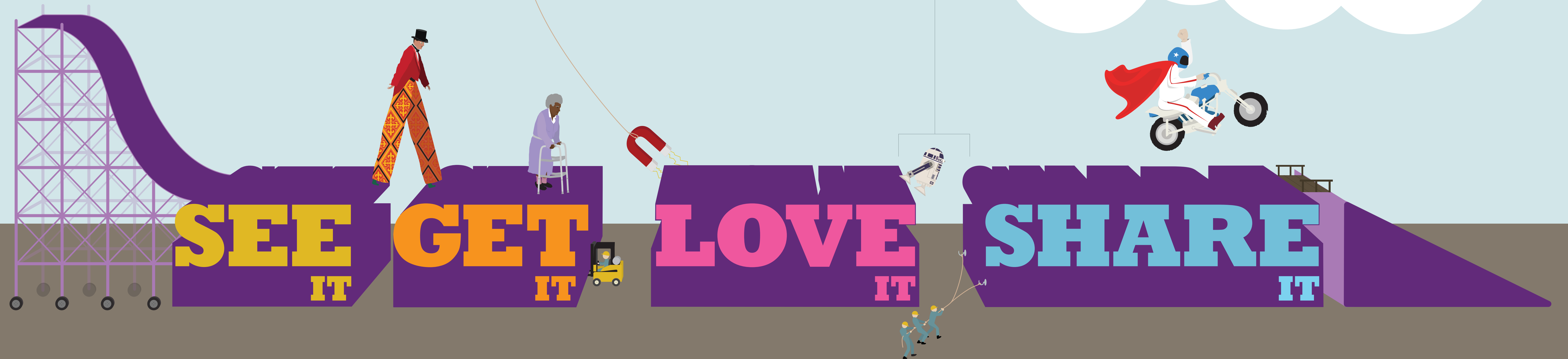


THE ADVOCACY CONTINUUM

Loyal customers are great: they love what you have to offer and keep coming back for more. But what if they went beyond that? What if they were inspired and motivated to tell people about their experiences with you, why they love you and your product, and why they're loyal to it? They'd be unpaid members of your marketing team, only more effective than any marketer—their friends will always trust them more than they trust you. The stories they tell carry an unvarnished authenticity that no sales or marketing effort can ever hope to have.

If you already have any customers like this, you probably call them your best customers. We call them advocates. And to develop advocates who tell stories about you, you have to be able to tell your own story.



Effective Storytelling Closes the Gaps

Everyone you want to reach is somewhere along the Advocacy Continuum (illustrated below). Your goal is to move them further along the continuum.

Effective storytelling closes the gaps between the stages, enabling your audience—be they canyon-jumping speed demons, slow-walking senior citizens, or people in-between—to move quickly and easily along the continuum toward advocacy. Knowing which gaps are toughest for your audience to bridge is essential for designing your storytelling strategy and determining where to focus your efforts.

AWARENESS IS SEEING IT

For people to see you, they need to know who you are, what you do, and where to find you, in real life or online. How can you get people to see it?

Be Remarkable. If you stand out, the audience that has its radar tuned to find things like you will take note. Remarkability is partly inherent in the product or service, and partly driven by remarkable stories.

Be Visible. Make sure that when your audience goes looking, they can find you. Visibility can be bought, but that only guarantees that people will see it, not that they will get it, love it, or share it.

Have Advocates. The best way for people to see it is to be introduced to it by someone they trust.

UNDERSTANDING IS GETTING IT

Before someone can love it, they have to understand not only what it is, but how it can make their life better. What makes people get it?

Simplicity. If it's simple to explain and understand, people may get it quickly and easily.

Access. Sometimes, you have to experience it to get it. Creating access means creating opportunities for people to see it, touch it, feel it, smell it, or taste it first hand.

Explanation. In the absence of access, a visual illustration, like a video or an information graphic, can effectively substitute for experience.

Vocabulary. Sometimes an analogy or metaphor—or simply choosing the right words—can lead to understanding.

APPRECIATION IS LOVING IT

We all want people to love what we do the way we love it, but we're biased. What do you need to inspire love in others?

Create Value. Make people's lives easier, better, more productive, more satisfying.

Inspire Joy. Sometimes the value is in simply making people happy.

Deliver Quality. Superior quality of design, production, or service is usual evidence of passion that ignites passion in others.

Be Authentic. People will embrace an authentic story, which can make them even more receptive when they experience the product.

ADVOCACY IS SHARING IT

Advocacy is the promised land, the other side of the canyon, and the place that leads to more people seeing it. How can you get people talking about you?

Be Remarkable. Give them something to talk about.

Earn Trust. People have to trust that if they advocate for you, their credibility is safe.

Be Enthusiastic. Genuine excitement is contagious. Even if they start the conversation talking about your enthusiasm, talk will eventually turn to what you're raving about.

Deliver Benefits. People share if they stand to benefit, through status (check out this cool new band I discovered), utility (I'm texting, you totally should too, because then I can text you), or incentive (if you sign up, I get 25 bucks).