

Outside-In

by Jason Cohen on December 25, 2007

Actions speak louder than slogans: Great support, quality, service, is best sold through demonstration.



What do these things have in common:

1. The People's Republic of China
2. Smucker's® line of "100% Simply Fruit®" spreads
3. "Scrubs will be right back after these messages."

They all follow **Brandon's Rule:**

If it's on the outside, it's not on the inside.

China is not a Republic, that Smucker's line is 30% juice, and there's no more Scrubs after the final commercial break.

When something is true, you don't need to announce it. You don't need to convince people of it. You don't have to draw attention to it.

Here's some more:

- We put customers first.
- We treat customers as partners.
- We have unmatched customer support.

The quality of customer support is something you notice right away. Either they answer the phone quickly, or they don't. Either the person on the other end genuinely helps you, or they don't. Either your "account manager" continues to provide service after the sale, or she doesn't.

I can't count the number of times I've heard a C_O say "What distinguishes us from our competitors is better customer service." Theoretically, having good service is not only a competitive advantage, it's also the primary way to develop solid relationships, promote word-of-mouth advertising (the best kind), and can even make a sale even when the first impression was unfavorable.

But you can't convince people you have good support by telling them so. In fact, telling them so might turn them off.

Here's what I tell folks in demos: "While you're trialing our software, also trial our tech support. Give 'em a call and test it out. Make sure we're responsive and helpful."

When you hit someone over the head with honesty, it leaves a mark. People are so used to hearing things like "We have unbeatable customer service" and "Customer service is priority number one," the words are water off a duck's back. Even if true, they're meaningless.

So when I tell them to try it for themselves, I get amazing reactions. "Wow," someone recently told me, "I've never had a vendor actually encourage me to call them for support." My response was: "Well, I could tell you we have great customer service, but you wouldn't believe me." His response to that: "I don't have to call. I already know you guys are going to rock."

When was the last time you built that kind of relationship with a *potential* customer during the *initial demo*? **Just by being honest.**

So don't say it, do it. Encourage potential customers to

notice, but let them come to their own conclusions.

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