

### 3 Simple Steps to Building Emotionally Connected Customers

It should go without saying that branding is important. From a Fortune 500 company to the little shop down the street, branding is how businesses establish themselves in the minds of consumers. Miss this opportunity, and your brand passes consumers like a ship in the night. But, do it right by building an emotional connection, and you will have a customer for life.

A recent study showed that emotionally connected customers are “four times more likely to shop those retailers first when relevant needs arise, as compared to consumers who are simply familiar and satisfied with their retailers.” These “connected” customers are also “50 percent more likely to advocate for the brand and recommend the retailer to others.”

Essentially, the more connected customers are to your brand, the more likely they are to seek out your brand, and recommend it to others. It seems very obvious, but many businesses — especially small businesses with limited marketing budgets — write off brand building in favor of other needs. Unfortunately, neglecting branding needs comes at the expense of building this emotional connection with consumers, which has long-term consequences.

This is good news for businesses with limited marketing budgets because it doesn't require tens of thousands of dollars to create an emotional connection. In fact, most small businesses would be better off investing in improvements to their operations rather than putting all of their marketing dollars into “daily deal” programs like Groupon. There are three simple steps to follow to build brands with which customers can emotionally connect:

1. Build your brand based on one single idea that demonstrates a value to potential consumers that they cannot get from any of your competitors. (For example Zappos built their brand on unmatched customer service).
2. Focus your efforts (and expenses) on fulfilling this promise of unique value and ensure you can deliver on everything that you promise.
3. Do not stray from this focus over time. Keep it simple and consistent. While you can innovate and upgrade your brand, you must always keep it differentiated from competitors in that single, unique way.

Any business, larger or small, can adhere to these three steps to create emotionally connected customers. It simply requires following the building blocks of branding. Differentiate your brand in a meaningful way, and keep that differentiating factor simple and consistent. It doesn't require a big budget, just a dedication to maintaining a brand. And, if you are successful, you will create a large body of emotionally connected customers who are more likely to seek out your brand and promote it to others.