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How to Create Raving Fans and Zealots For Your Brand

Why do some brands succeed beyond all reasonable expectation, while other brands that are just as good or even better wind up failing within a few months? How is it that an Oprah becomes an icon, while dozens of other talk show hosts quickly fall into oblivion? Why does Nike inspire such loyalty, while other brands of shoes struggle for market share?

In the book *Primal Branding*, Patrick Hanlon explains his theory for “Creating zealots for your brand, your company and your future.” He explains how the powerful brands become that way by carefully (and sometimes accidentally) creating a community of believers by employing seven different marketing tactics. All seven of these components are found behind every super-successful brand, product, service, personality, social cause, religion or movement.

Imagine if your product inspired the same level of loyalty that Apple, Disney and Starbucks receive from their

customers. Now imagine you can actually engineer that loyalty right into your brand – it makes your head spin a bit, doesn't it?

According to Patrick, these are the 7 key ingredients that you or your product, service or brand must have to inspire zealous loyalty.

1. The Creation Story – This is the back story that sets the stage. Think of Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak in their parents' garage building the first personal computer, Jeff Bezos writing Amazon's business plan in the backseat of his car, or pharmacist Dr. John Pemberton concocting Coca-cola.

You need a back story for your product, service or business. This might be how you got the idea, your struggle to solve a problem, your inspiration, etc. Storytelling is as old as language itself and touches people on a very deep, primal level. Do you want to foster a real, unifying connection on a subconscious level with your prospect? Then you need a story.

2. The Creed – This is what you believe in, your core principle, your mission statement. A creed differentiates and motivates. According to Sidney Pollack, "It's the spine that supports the entire

enterprise." See if you can recognize these creeds:

"It's the real thing"

"Save the whales"

"All men are created equal"

"Just do it"

So what's your creed? Invest some time to get this right. And if you have more than one product and the products are wildly different, know that you'll want a different creed for each one. For example, you won't have the same creed for an info product on traffic generation as an info product on building your abs.

3. The Icons – These are best defined as a quick concentration of meaning. This could be a logo like the Nike swoosh, the smell of Cinnabons in the mall, a country's flag, a national anthem, Alice Cooper's eye make-up, Kiss's face make-up, the Budweiser Clydesdales, Disney's castle as well as Disney's 2 black mouse ears, McDonald's arches, the 2 notes Law and Order plays just before the show appears, the opening music to any television show or the 5 signature notes of Intel.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aEDpqFHTSVM>

Choose your icon carefully, and then use it in all of

your marketing. Update it when needed, being careful not to lose it in the process. It should always be instantly recognizable and tightly tied to your brand.

4. The Rituals – This is how our customers interact with your product and service, and how you interact with them. This one is a little harder to define and illustrate. We have rituals for everything we do on a frequent basis, including brushing our teeth, doing laundry, driving our car and checking our email. The key here is to focus on improving the experience the customer has with your product or brand. How can you raise the experience to a higher level? How can you make it more enjoyable, or even something they look forward to? How can you take the stress out and put the fun in?

Here's a great example: The ritual of flying. While most airlines are cutting every frill to the absolute bare bone, Virgin is moving in the opposite direction. They hand you a plastic shoulder sack full of goodies. There's a television screen on the back of every seat. They serve Virgin Cola and let you listen to music and watch movies non-stop.

What can you do to make the ritual of discovering,

buying and using your product more enjoyable - so enjoyable, in fact, that people will talk about you and your product?

5. The Pagans, or Nonbelievers – These are best defined as “those other guys.” Us against them. Apple vs P.C. and Internet Explorer vs Firefox vs Chrome. One political party vs their opposition. One sports team vs their rival. Nothing unites a group faster than having a common 'enemy.' 7up declared itself the “un-cola.” Taco Bell tells you to “think outside the bun.”

Defining your pagans is important in defining who you are. Do you teach methods of getting free traffic? Then paid traffic methods are your pagans. Do you show people how to eat only clean, healthy foods? Then pseudo foods, pseudo food manufacturers and people who eat pseudo foods are your pagans.

6. The Sacred Words – words specific and exclusive to your own product, service or brand. Walt Disney has 'Mickey Mouse,' 'Goofy' and 'Donald Duck.' Starbucks has a 'grande.' Dr. Seuss invented an entire world of sacred words. Apple has “think different.” Texters have their own sacred language. Information product

creators and authors create their own terms to define what they're teaching. By creating your own sacred words, your fans and followers are on the inside of the secret circle with their own language. It's a cohesive, insider's-only knowledge that brings a group together.

Think of a young couple in love – they develop their own language that is indecipherable to anyone else, and in this way they become 2 against the world. You can replicate this with your own sacred words, so don't be afraid to get creative – your customers will love you for it.

7. The Leader – this person is the catalyst, the risk taker, the visionary, the iconoclast who set out against all odds to achieve something. Think Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Oprah, Gandhi, Richard Branson, Nelson Mandela and others who have led movements, companies and causes.

The leader could be the founder or it could be someone who takes their place functionally or symbolically. This means if you don't want to be the leader, you can choose someone else, like a spokesperson for your brand.

Does all of this sound like too much work just to sell a product? Perhaps it is if you're thinking small. If your goal is to sell a few hundred copies of something and move on, then you don't need these 7 steps. But if you want to create something that takes on a life of its own and grows exponentially, then adhering to every one of these 7 pieces of the Primal Code is essential.

We talk about making a video or an idea or a product go viral. How does that happen? Is it an accident, or is it because that product or idea meets every one of these 7 criteria? Spend some time looking at the famous people and especially popular brands, and see if they don't use all 7 of these in their marketing.

Look at it this way – if you could create a brand that grows like a religion, wouldn't you want to? Imagine the people you can help, the alliances you can forge, and the profits you can make.

I highly recommend you get your own copy of *Primal Branding* by Patrick Hanlon, because I've only just scratched the surface here of what he teaches. In fact, if you only read one marketing-related book, this is in my opinion the one to read.