

The Ultimate Guide To Brand Ambassador Marketing

Your manual to reaching more people, promoting your content, and growing your business with brand ambassadors.

By: Alan VanToai
Founder & CEO - CrewFire.com

Introduction

September 2020 - Bethesda, MD. It's 2020 and organic reach for brands is plummeting, bids for paid ads are spiraling upwards, and word-of-mouth has continued to reign supreme. While social media has skyrocketed the power of marketing, it has also crowded the ad space to new levels.

Within this new climate, brand ambassador marketing provides a powerful and effective boost to traditional advertising methods for brands looking to cut through the noise and reach more people online. However, for brand ambassador programs to be effective, you need the right framework and strategy to succeed.

This book provides that framework.

The insights shared within this guide were gained through 15+ years of direct experience working first as a brand ambassador, then managing brand ambassador programs, and finally building a suite of tools and products to help over 1,500 brands work with over 500,000 brand ambassadors across the world.

I've witnessed first-hand the [power](#) of community-driven growth, and have had the privilege of empowering 1,000s of brands to build and mobilize armies of brand ambassadors to help them grow.

I'm excited to help you along that journey as well.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan VanToai', with a stylized, flowing script.

Alan VanToai

Founder & CEO - [CrewFire.com](https://crewfire.com)

About the Author



Alan VanToai is a Vietnamese-American software entrepreneur who has spent most of his entrepreneurial career building software that helps teams and communities work, communicate, and grow together.

He's the founder of [CrewFire.com](https://crewfire.com) (a brand ambassador platform) and one of the co-founders of [Telefuel.com](https://telefuel.com) (a power messaging app for teams and communities).

In addition to CrewFire and Telefuel, Alan has founded and sold two other successful startups at the intersection of business and community, with [SimpleCrew.com](https://simplecrew.com) (a reporting tool for street marketing teams), and [Chainfuel.com](https://chainfuel.com) (an analytics, anti-spam, and administration tool for chat communities).

Before starting his own businesses, Alan cut his teeth working in street teams, brand ambassador programs, and marketing for some of the largest brands, including Red Bull, Virgin Mobile, Coachella, Electric Daisy Carnival, and more.

It was from these experiences that Alan would start SimpleCrew and CrewFire, and ultimately share his insights in this book.

Business aside, Alan is passionate about self-development, personal growth, travel, and fitness. He writes and publishes videos on those topics and more on his personal website, [www.ZenHustle.com](https://www.zenhustle.com).

About CrewFire

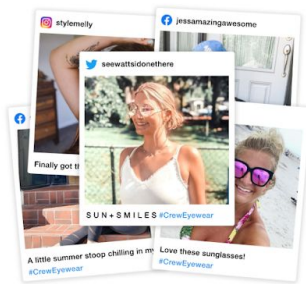
Before we jump into things, here's a little about us.

CrewFire is a brand ambassador management software and marketing platform.

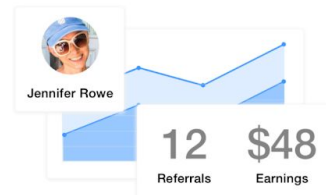
Turn Your Existing Customers Into Your Growth Engine with CrewFire 2.0.



Increase Brand **Engagement & Sharing** on Social Media.



Drive **User-Generated Content** on Social Media.



Drive **Referrals & Word-of-Mouth** on Social (and Beyond).

We help consumer brands drive more engagement, shares, user-generated content, and referrals by turning their customers into their army of brand ambassadors and micro-influencers on social media (and beyond!).

352 People	251k Reach	280k Reach	152k Reach
Nancy Drew Nancy@gmail.com			
Harry Potter Nimbus2k@Chainfuel.com			
Dave Grohl Foodbar@Telefuel.com			
Nathan Barry Nathan@ConvertKit.com			

The CrewFire platform includes everything brands need to build, manage, and grow a thriving brand ambassador program, including customizable sign-up forms, an ambassador directory, and a variety of powerful tools to mobilize and reward your brand ambassadors for driving more traffic and sales from social media and beyond.

To learn more and request an invitation, head over to www.CrewFire.com.

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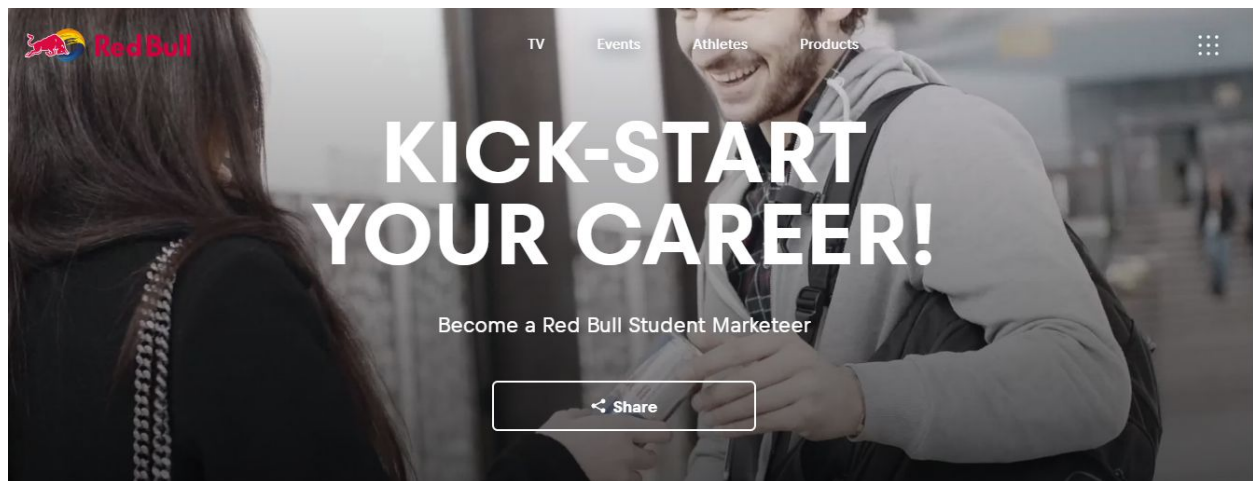
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Who Is This Book For?

While this book is ideally geared towards founders, CEOs, CMOs, VPs of Marketing, marketers and entrepreneurs of direct-to-consumer (DTC) e-commerce brands, I will say if anything this book is for anyone who's ever asked, "How do I set up a brand ambassador program?"

Throughout the years of building CrewFire, we've been impressed and surprised by the broad number of brands and industries that have benefited from brand ambassadors. Various industries, from universities to musical artists, have all benefited from hosting an ambassador program!

When executed right, brand ambassador programs can be extremely powerful. If you look at examples such as [MVMT](#), [Gymshark](#), [Red Bull](#), and [Bumble](#), their ambassador programs even became a major defining characteristic of the brand.



However, unlike other marketing channels, managing a brand ambassador program takes community management. It takes a lot of energy to execute them well, and that's why we've assembled this extensive guide for you. In

this guide, we will be discussing what works, what doesn't, and how to maximize the power of brand ambassador marketing for your brand.

The Problem

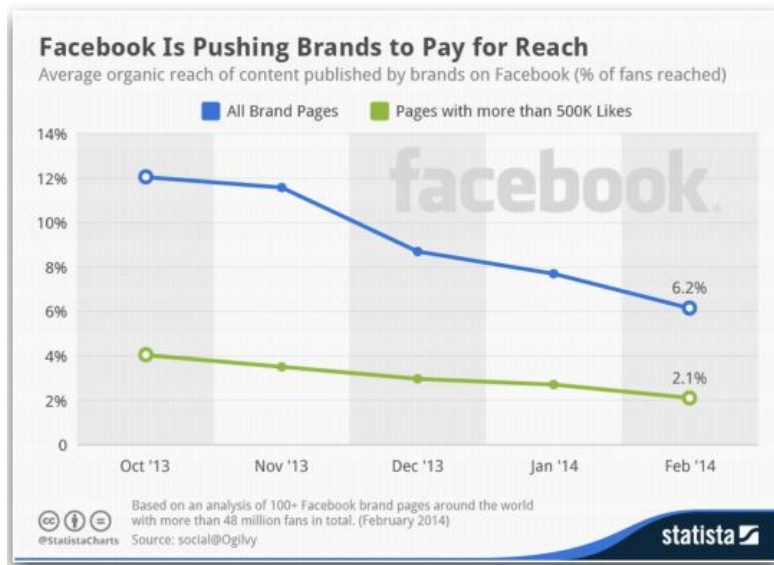
Before we dive into the mechanics of setting up a program, I'd first like to set the stage of the obstacles DTC brands are facing today.

In general, it's getting more and more challenging to stand out online and acquire customers through conventional channels, such as print media, paid social ads, and organic reach.

44%

YoY growth in the direct-to-consumer (DTC) industry since 2018

The cost per acquisition of a customer, or CPA's, are increasing. As a whole, the DTC industry has grown 44% year over year since 2018, with an increasing number of brands and e-commerce players in all niches.

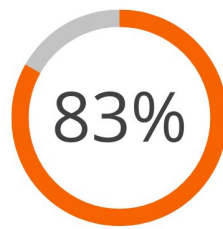


Especially in a post-COVID world, even reaching customers offline using authentic marketing tactics has become increasingly difficult, if not financially unfeasible.

Of course with the density of the space, consumers have run into their fair

share of bad players which has only resulted in souring trust in brands and advertising that are able to penetrate through. It is estimated that 84% of Millennials do NOT like advertising (McCarthy Group 2014), and are 115% more influenced by word of mouth than traditional advertising ([Talk Triggers – Chatter Matters](#)).

In other words, consumers are being so overwhelmed with advertising that they feel they cannot trust it, and are turning to people to help them decide what to buy. According to a Nielsen study, 83% of consumers now say that they either completely or somewhat trust recommendations from family, colleagues, and friends about products and services – making these recommendations the highest ranked source for trustworthiness. [[Nielsen](#)]



Of consumers rely completely or somewhat on recommendations from family, colleagues, and friends.

With bids for paid ads increasing, and organic reach continuing to decrease every day, brands that fail to adapt can be caught in a potentially fatal marketing trap if they do not adjust.

In order for your brand to stand out then, your approach to marketing must be different. It must be authentic and feel real.

What is Working?

So, if ads on their own won't work, what will? As a brand you may be wondering where the opportunity lies in order to stand out from a saturated market and reach your target audience. The answer to this question can be found in what today's consumers consider important when making the purchase decision.

The answer is social media.

Social media has given rise to three main factors that have become paramount to the average consumer's purchase decision, which offer a world of opportunities for DTC brands.

Social Engagement



The first factor in regards to social media is the importance of social engagement and shares. Consumers want to know that your company is real and legit. They want to know that you have not bought your followers, that other people are buying this product, and that your customers support and enjoy your product or service.

Social media platforms try to gauge social engagement by thoroughly analyzing your social media presence, across multiple platforms and the types of engagements other people have with your brand.

This is where likes, comments, and how your company responds to those comments, matters, as consumers are 71% more likely to make a purchase based on social media referrals.¹

¹ "What is Influencer Marketing - SlideShare." 25 Oct. 2016, <https://www.slideshare.net/influencemarketinghub/what-is-influencer-marketing-67640632>. Accessed 11 Sep. 2020.



71%



Of consumers are more likely to make purchase based on social media referrals

Buying products and services from companies with high levels of positive social engagement has become critical within the DTC space.

User-Generated Content

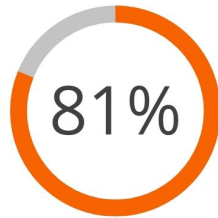
Today's consumers also consider user-generated content as an important factor when deciding whether to patron a brand. User-generated content (UGC) is just a technical word that refers to the photos, images, videos, and other media everyday people create about the products and services they support.

Without giving away too much of what we'll cover later in this guide, user-generated content can include pictures of how the product looked when it arrived or videos of people raving about their favorite product. In a nutshell, UGC can be compared to a review on steroids, as it provides consumers with an immeasurable amount of intangible data about your product.

UGC has become increasingly important to consumers because it enables them to actually see your brand in action, without buying any of your products or using your services, to determine how impactful that product will, or will not be, for them.

Additionally, the ironic beauty of user-generated content is that it (typically) comes from everyday people who don't have expansive advertising

budgets, marketing teams, or equipment. This generates a higher level of trust among consumers, and is an extremely effective strategy that any brand can employ.



Of U.S. consumers trust advice from blogs over high dollar advertisements.

A recent study found that user generated content is 50% more trusted by internet users than traditional media and

advertising, and as a further example, that 81% of U.S. consumers trust advice and information from blogs as opposed to high dollar advertisements.²

Word-of-Mouth

Lastly, today's consumers are prioritizing word-of-mouth and referrals much heavier than they ever have before.

According to Nieslen, 90% of consumers trust peer recommendation and in their internal studies, found that 92% of the participants trusted personal recommendations.³

What may sound even more surprising is that 84% of people purchase a product based on a referral, irrelevant to their personal relationship with the person.⁴ In others words, the majority of consumers would rather rely on the opinion or recommendation of a complete stranger, as opposed to

² "What is Influencer Marketing - SlideShare." 25 Oct. 2016, <https://www.slideshare.net/influencemarketinghub/what-is-influencer-marketing-67640632>. Accessed 11 Sep. 2020.

³ "Global Consumers' Trust in 'Earned' Advertising ... - Nielsen." 10 Apr. 2012, <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/press-releases/2012/nielsen-global-consumers-trust-in-earned-advertising-grows/>. Accessed 11 Sep. 2020.

⁴ "The Rise of Social Selling | SBI - Sales Benchmark Index." 14 Aug. 2013, <https://salesbenchmarkindex.com/insights/the-rise-of-social-selling/>. Accessed 11 Sep. 2020.

relying directly on a company to tell them how good a product or service can be for them.

Referrals work so powerfully that even the Harvard Business Review found that companies can expect a 16% increase in profit from referral customers should they put the proper systems in place (i.e. referral programs).⁵

The Opportunity

Hopefully you haven't thrown your hands up in the air and given up entirely yet. We are just getting started!

The three factors listed above are things consumers find extremely valuable and can provide huge opportunities for brands to be able to stand out in an authentic way.

The question you might be wondering now is *how*? How do you incorporate these factors into your marketing strategy to ensure your ads, social media, and content are being distributed and seen by the right people? What business asset or tool can you use to leverage these?

The short answer: **brand ambassadors**.

Why Brand Ambassadors Are Effective?

Brand ambassadors enable you to unlock a dormant, yet wildly effective asset within your existing business: your customers. By transforming your customers into brand ambassadors, you

⁵ "Why Customer Referrals Can Drive Stunning F
<https://hbr.org/2011/06/why-customer-referrals-c>



Greater click through rates



Greater conversion rates



Increased return on ad spend



Increased visibility of content



Increased visibility of social media posts



Increased social proof

can catapult your company's marketing campaigns to unforeseen levels.

It is important to note upfront, though, that brand ambassadors work best not as a replacement marketing channel, but rather as a marketing channel that can enhance and optimize every other marketing channel that your company is currently investing in - whether that is paid ads, social media advertising, or content marketing.

By leveraging brand ambassadors, you can unlock an entire suite of additional growth and revenue, which include:

- **Greater click through rates.** When ads are shared or engaged by brand ambassadors, they achieve increased percentages of click through rates.
- **Greater conversion rates.** One study found that conversion increased anywhere between 3-10X when a brand shared their content through influencers in their industry.⁶
- **Increased return on ad spend.** Using brand ambassadors can increase the efficiency of your advertising dollars, as they will reach greater levels of penetration and conversion.
- **Increased visibility of content.** Naturally, through brand ambassadors, you're able to get the word out much more quickly and efficiently and achieve greater visibility of your online content.
- **Increased visibility of social media posts.** Likewise, social media platforms and their algorithms are geared towards boosting the visibility of content that reach high levels of engagement within the

⁶ "What is Influencer Marketing - SlideShare." 25 Oct. 2016, <https://www.slideshare.net/influencemarketinghub/what-is-influencer-marketing-67640632>. Accessed 11 Sep. 2020.

first few minutes of posting. Brand ambassadors have been shown to drive that engagement, and increase your brand's overall visibility.

- **Increased Social Proof.** By utilizing brand ambassadors as the face of your company, your brand gains greater loyalty and can pass the 'social proof test,' so to speak, that many of today's consumers have.

Essentially, everything you have, whether it's a blog post or an ad for a newly released product, will help your brand stand out even more as a result of your brand ambassadors because it will be perceived as more authentic and trustworthy to your audience.

Not to mention, using brand ambassadors has the added benefit of reducing content production cost and helping you to repurpose the hundreds of thousands of dollars you'd have to spend in order to reach the same number of people.

Overall, brand ambassadors are effective because they enable a brand's content to cut through the noise of traditional advertising practices and reach the right people. Brand ambassador programs achieve this because they are using real people, and who better to promote a product to your target audience than an already happy customer.

Brand ambassadors are the VIP that can get you into the club without having to stand for hours in line!

What Is a Brand Ambassador?

Before digging into the mechanics of setting up a brand ambassador program, I'll quickly lay the foundation of what a brand ambassador is.

How we define brand ambassadors

Brand Ambassadors go by many different names: influencers, customer advocates, brand advocates, micro-influencers, referrals, the list can really go on.

However, for our purposes, we'll define a brand ambassador as an individual within your existing customer base that acts as an authentic voice for your brand.

Brand ambassadors know your product. They buy it consistently, they use it, they already talk it up to their friends and family, and they are generally passionate about your brand and support your company. They are your number one fans, who would be ready to take the field (if we were to use a sports analogy) when called upon.

Therefore, in a way, you can think of setting up a brand ambassador program like assembling the team that has been waiting anxiously on the sidelines, ready to be put in the ring. It's the process of taking your customers and enlisting them as advocates who will help you grow your business.

What does a brand ambassador do?

You may still be wondering, though, what exactly does a brand ambassador do? While we'll go into this in much more detail later on in this guide, in short, brand ambassadors help grow your brand through a wide variety of activities, from liking and commenting on your social media posts, to driving sales through the use of referral codes, to answering customer service questions, all the way up to creating unique user-generated content all for your brand.

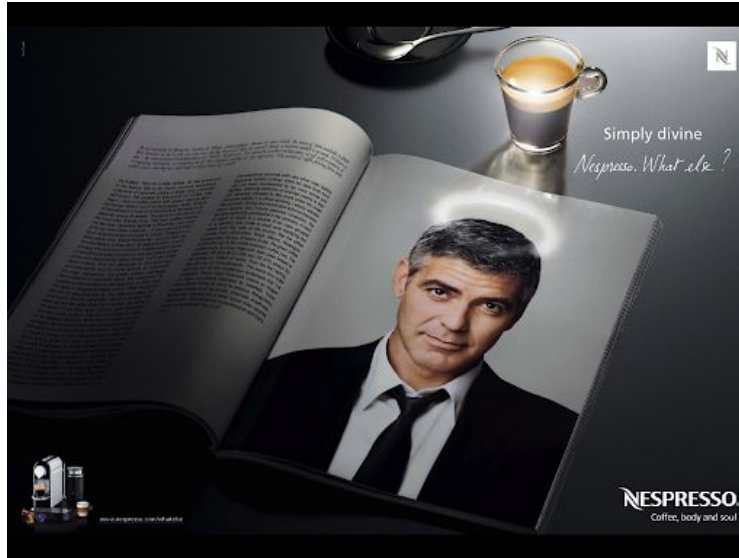
Referring back to the three main determinants of a consumer's purchase decision, brand ambassadors:

- Drive engagement & shares
- Drive user-generated content that you can use in your marketing
- Build trust and brand loyalty
- Drive referrals & word-of-mouth on social media and beyond
- Sell your product/service organically and authentically
- Represent your company online, on social media, and anywhere else people can find your brand

Brand Ambassadors vs. Influencers

When it comes to brand ambassadors, there is definitely an overlap with what many would consider an influencer. While the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive, they are also not exactly the same, and it's important to keep a few key differences in mind as you begin the process of setting up your program.

The first difference being, unlike your average consumer or fan, influencers tend to be individuals with a higher degree of recognition. This 'recognition' can range anywhere from Instagram models with millions of followers to the international celebrities of likes of Drew Brees for Untuckit, the Kardashian/Jenner family for Yeezy, or even George Clooney for Nespresso.



Actor, George Clooney leveraging his influence for Nespresso

While they can surely have some level of recognition, by our standards, unlike influencers, brand ambassadors have an established relationship with your brand, which is the desirable outcome when starting an ambassador program.



[Athleta](#) brand ambassadors

Going back to trust, today's consumers are smart and naturally know that celebrities and influencers are being paid to advertise a product or service. Because there is (a lot) money involved at that level, consumers have a hard time deciphering how much the celebrity actually likes the product versus how much they like getting paid. This, in turn, can create a point of friction when deciding to make a purchase for some consumers.

Conversely, when you activate normal, everyday people who enjoy and interact with your products or services regularly, and recruit them to be your brand ambassadors, your company experiences more benefits. It has been estimated that 30% of consumers are more likely to buy a product recommended by a non-celebrity blogger.⁷

Instead of renting space on the profile of an influencer in a very transactional way, you can leverage brand ambassadors who already have a deep connection with your brand to make the entire relationship and subsequent promotions and marketing come across more meaningful and authentic.

What Makes a Good Brand Ambassador Program?

Now that you have a full understanding of what ambassadors are, what they do, and how they can benefit your company, you might be anxious to kick off your ambassador program. However, before we do so, it's also important to touch on several things that your brand will need in order to run a successful brand ambassador program.

While we don't like to think of them as requirements per se, they are key factors that will make a huge difference between a successful brand ambassador program and one doomed to fail from the start.

The first and most important factor is having a customer base or audience that is genuinely passionate about your brand, the company's story, values, products, and social mission. Your brand needs to have a message that resonates in some way with your audience on an emotional level, and is one that people are deeply passionate about.

⁷ "Peers Have Influence Over Consumers, Celebrities Don't." 29 Mar. 2016, <https://www.collectivebias.com/post/blog-2016-03-non-celebrity-influencers-drive-store-purchases>. Accessed 11 Sep. 2020.

In other words, if your company itself doesn't have a cult-like following, has an unclear message, or is centered around a product or service that is mundane or otherwise not emotionally charged, it will be quite difficult to gain traction with a brand ambassador program. It's why you don't see too many brand standard copy paper companies hosting brand ambassador programs.

Another good indication that your brand is ready for a brand ambassador program is by assessing its current traction. From our experience, companies with at least \$500,000 thousand in annual revenue or a customer list or audience of at least 10,000 people are the most poised to excel with a brand ambassador program.

This is not to say you can't start a brand ambassador program. It will, however, be much more difficult to make it successful, and will require a lot more resources, capital and hands on dedication from a team in order to accomplish your ambassador program goals.

Therefore, brand ambassadors tend to work best for brands that are already in motion, so to speak, or that have at the bare minimum:

- A product or service with proven traction (ideally at least \$500,000 in annual revenue)
- An existing audience from whom you can recruit and build your program, or at least

BRAND AMBASSADOR PROGRAM READINESS

CHECKLIST:



- ☐ Min. \$500,000 in annual revenue
- ☐ Min. 10,000 email subscribers
- ☐ Min. 35,000 Instagram followers
- ☐ A dedicated marketing manager
- ☐ Min. 1-2 hours of bandwidth to dedicate to managing the program
- ☐ A resonating brand, product, service, mission, or social mission

10,000 email subscribers or 30,000 Instagram followers

- A dedicated marketing manager
- Bandwidth to dedicate 1-2 hours a day to program management

If your company has not yet reached any of these metrics, it may be too early to consider establishing a brand ambassador program. Brand ambassador programs are expensive. We recommend walking before you run, and focus your already limited resources on gaining initial customers and building a loveable product through traditional marketing strategies.

That way, once you do have a brand with passionate customers who love your products, creating a brand ambassador program can unlock even more tremendous growth for your company, and it will be much more seamless.

Creating A Brand Ambassador Program

Now we'll get into the mechanics of creating a brand ambassador program. The rest of this guide will be outlined as follows:

- Pre-launch (preparation & planning)
 - Strategy
 - Is my brand ready for brand ambassadors
 - Who should manage brand ambassadors
 - What are our goals for our program
 - What is the ideal brand ambassador
 - Tactical
 - How do you track brand ambassadors
 - What do brand ambassadors do
 - How much do brand ambassadors cost
 - How do brand ambassadors get paid

- How to recruit brand ambassadors
- Bonus
 - What additional activities can I do to make the program succeed
- Launch
 - How to get the word out
 - How to onboard ambassadors
- Management
 - What you need to do to run the program
 - How to keep the program fresh
 - How to maximize the program
 - How to cycle out inactive ambassadors

By the end of this guide, you'll be armed with everything you need to know on building, managing, and growing a thriving community of brand ambassadors.



Pre-launch

Prior to launching your brand ambassador program, it is important to prepare and create a plan for your program. You want to adopt the same mindset you would have if onboarding a team of salespeople or full-time employees.

The more intentional you are about training and preparing them, the better your program will be. This preparation can be further broken into three main segments:

1. Strategy

The first stage in the pre-launch of your brand ambassador program is laying out a strategy that will best benefit your company. This stage involves looking strategically at what you plan to accomplish and how you plan to do so. This will help provide clarity before diving into setting up the mechanics.

Assess your brand's readiness

Assuming you have met the \$1 million revenue mark, there are additional considerations to keep in mind before launching a brand ambassador program. In this section of planning you may ask yourself, "are brand ambassadors right for my business?" Brands are typically brand-ambassador-ready when they have active and highly engaging social media platforms, a product or service that people truly love, and a strong customer base to recruit from. If your customers have nothing but positive things to say about your brand, then you are more likely to have highly motivated brand ambassadors!

Most likely these will be easy checkboxes for you to check off. However, if there is even any hesitation to any of these, it is important to address them

head on and assess your situation before deciding to invest time in a brand ambassador program.

Designate a program leader

At this stage it is also critical to know who will take ownership of the entire program. Appoint a designated liaison, whether in house or outsourced, who will manage the brand ambassador program. In your selection process make sure to prioritize someone who will be responsive and able to maintain constant and consistent communication with your brand ambassadors.

While some companies use existing employees, others have leveraged student interns or third party professionals to manage their programs. No matter who it is, the most important thing is to have someone who will be empowered to dedicate the time and energy that is required to run a strong program.

Define your program goals

Next, you will want to define your goals for the brand ambassador program. Are you looking to increase revenues by a certain amount, to drive additional traffic, or to increase the level of social engagement and sense of community around your company. Maybe your company has adopted a new social mission and you want all your existing and future customers to know. Perhaps you want to drive revenue of a new product soon to be released. Whatever your goals may be, it is paramount that they are established and then communicated to the program leader, who can bake the expectations to achieve each program goal you set.

Profile your Dream Ambassador

Lastly, once you have an idea of your brand's readiness and desired outcome of a brand ambassador program, it is important to envision who

will 'fit the role.' Specifically, you will want to envision what your ideal brand ambassador does, what they wear, where they shop, how they use your product, etc. so that when the applications begin to roll in, you'll know immediately who would or would not make a good fit. Ideally, you'll want the profile of your dream brand ambassador to align very closely with your target demographic.

Additionally, certain brands also emphasize working with brand ambassadors who possess certain core marketing or other desired skills that can be leveraged in the program, such as video editing or photography skills, among other things.

Furthermore, as you begin to outline what types of people your brand ambassador program would like to attract, decide whether you want the program to be exclusive, in the traditional sense of an invite only scenario, or a more open scenario with lower barriers of entry to attract a wider range of ambassadors. Each strategy will have its own benefits depending on the brand, so having this conversation upfront will give your brand a clear vision when it comes to recruiting ambassadors.

Tactical

Once you've outlined the broader framework of your program, the next important piece to consider is the tactical measures you will take in order to continue to shape its structure.

Define Program Tooling

First, you'll want to invest the time upfront in selecting the software or suite of tools that you will use to track everything within your program, from monitoring all the work that brand ambassadors submit, to

processing payments or redemptions, to managing all the content that is generated in an open and transparent manner.

When considering what tooling to use, of course there are many DIY (do it yourself) techniques that you can employ. What we like to call “FrankenFire,” a brand ambassador program can of course be run through a collection of Google Forms, Spreadsheets, Facebook Groups or GroupMe/WhatsApp Groups, Email Lists, SMS messaging tools and Trello boards. All of these tools in some combination or the other will enable your team at the bare minimum to do all it needs in order to meet the demands of running a brand ambassador program.

However, there are also all inclusive portals like [CrewFire.com](https://crewfire.com) that combine all these tools into one so that you and your program leader are not forced to jump from one app to the next and lose that feeling of continuity. CrewFire handles all the processes that a DIY solution can but with many other benefits built right into the platform, including Instagram engagement campaigns, affiliate & referral tracking, user-generated content campaigns, email and SMS blasts for company announcements, and the hosting of your brand ambassador community online.

The screenshot shows the CrewFire.com Ambassador portal. On the left is a sidebar with navigation links: Dashboard, Community, Activities, Ambassadors (highlighted), Rankings, Teams, Rewards, and Settings. The main content area is titled "Ambassadors" and shows "11 of 500 Ambassadors". There is a search bar and a green "Search" button. Below the search bar is a table of ambassadors with columns: NAME, EMAIL, FB, TW, IG, POINTS, MONEY, and JOINED. The table lists several ambassadors, including Alan VanBassador, Alan VanToai, Frederic Tulsidin, Michael Beaton, and Ngan Nguyen nhathat. At the top right of the main area, there is a link to "Visit ambassador portal" and a user profile for "Taylor Green".

NAME	EMAIL	FB	TW	IG	POINTS	MONEY	JOINED
Alan VanBassador	alan@telefuel.com	🔗	..	🔗	10234	0.00	2020-08-06
Alan VanToai	alan@crewfire.com	🔗	..	🔗	3059	0.00	2015-08-17
Alan VanToai	alan@vantoai.com	🔗	..	🔗	10920	0.00	2015-10-13
Frederic Tulsidin	frederic@tulsidin.ca	🔗	..	🔗	315	9.24	2018-11-28
Michael Beaton	michael@crewfire.com				0	0.00	2020-10-19
Ngan Nguyen nhathat	nhatkieungannnguyen@g...	🔗	..	🔗	10462	0.00	2017-03-22

Outline Your Program Activities

This is the point at which you will want to decide what specific activities your brand ambassadors will do in order to achieve your previously established goals.

This step is important because in this day and age, there's no shortage of digital water coolers. Your target audience is out there – hanging out, talking with friends, and scrolling on socials. In order for your brand ambassadors to come in and introduce you in a seamless way, planning out the activities they will do becomes very critical.

In general, you'll want your brand ambassador activities to be such that they subtly infiltrate – and not bombard (like an advertisement would) as if they came from a real person (because they are!).

More specifically, brand ambassadors can work to:

- Drive Sales
- Share your content online
- Engage with your content
- Create user generated content
- Grow your brand's influence
- Market your brand hands on
- Run your brand ambassador program

These activities will largely fall into either online activities, offline activities, or a mix of both.

Online

If you happen to be running short on ideas, below is a small sampling of the online activities your brand ambassadors can do:

- Invite their friends to your Facebook events or to like your business/fan page.
- Share your links and other content with their friends and family on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
- Review your business on Yelp or TripAdvisor.
- Like, comment, share your social media posts on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter or other social media sites.
- Record a video and post it to their social media, tagging your brand.
- Using your campaign hashtags across multiple platforms.
- Write a blog about your company, product, or service.
- Provide a written or video testimonial.
- Provide a reference.
- Answer customer questions directly.
- Share your company product surveys.
- Create and share User Generated Content (UGC).
- Distribute their referral codes or links.

Offline

Not everything ambassador activity has to take place online. To give you an idea, below are some offline activities that a brand ambassador can do as well to help supplement your ambassador campaigns:

- Attend a live event or conference.
- Speak at a live event or conference.
- Pass out flyers or printed materials.
- Sticker-bomb a certain geographic area.
- Conduct surveys.
- Operate a sales booth.

In general, there are really an infinite number of things that your brand ambassadors can do to help elevate your brand. Don't believe us? Check out our guide on the top 55 activities your brand ambassador team can do to mobilize even more buzz around your products and services.

Overall, we typically recommend that brands match these activities to upcoming product releases, company events, and marketing campaigns in other platforms, to help amplify their effect.

Eventually, you do want to get to the point where your brand ambassadors begin to self-generate a healthy percentage of the activities. However, in the beginning, and to hit the ground running, it's important to plan out the ideal activities as they align with your specific goals.

Define Rewards & Incentives

Based on this extensive list of what brand ambassadors can do, this section will now address the common question of “How much do brand ambassadors cost?”

The short answer is that it will largely depend on what works best for your company and what you decide during the pre-launch stage.

Before launching, however, what we first recommended, when designing a program's incentives, is to establish an “exchange rate” to quantify the rewards system that you choose.

Regardless if the incentives you ultimately choose are monetary or not, it is important to have an internally assigned dollar value for each unit of rewards that you choose. For example, within the CrewFire platform, we enable our clients to use points as a reward system. For each post or tweet ambassadors automatically earn a certain level of points, and brands typically establish a value of \$1 or \$0.01 for each point.

By establishing an exchange first, you will be able to determine how to assign rewards for each level of activity planned. It becomes easier to quantify how many points your company is willing to give away in

exchange for a tweet, an Instagram post, or any activity outlined above. Similar to an arcade - each completed activity earns ambassadors a certain level of points that they can then redeem as they wish.

Furthermore, in our experience, the best programs outline a system of incentives that reward the behavior they'd like to see. For example, lower levels of rewards are often given for low engagement tasks, such as tweets and likes and higher levels of rewards are given for higher levels of engagement. Establishing an exchange rate enables for smoother management from start to finish as well.

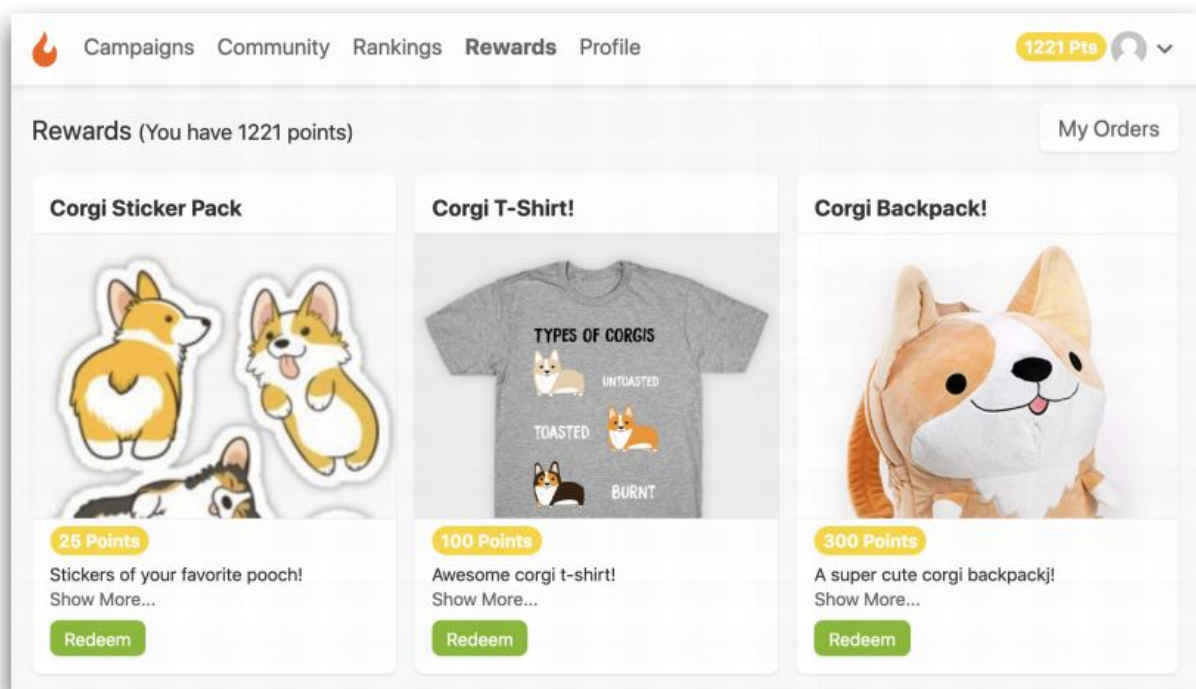
One major caveat: make sure to keep this 'rate' internal. You do not, and I repeat, do NOT, want to publicize the actual dollar amount of each point or unit of rewards to your brand ambassadors as this will only cheapen the program and motivate them to focus on the numbers instead of the activity. Remember, your brand ambassadors are there for you, not the money. The money is a benefit, but the magic in the program is being able to work behind the scenes with the company they love. Therefore, if you were to publish the actual dollar value of each reward it would only dilute the allure of being in the program in the first place.

Incentives for brand ambassadors typically fall into two distinct categories – monetary incentives and non-monetary incentives, and at this stage it is also important to decide whether you will use one over the other or a mix of both.

Non-monetary incentives include:

- **Free Products:** These are the most popular non-monetary incentives among brand ambassador programs, and can be very cost effective depending on the impact of your program. At the end of the day, customers are drawn to the idea of potentially being first in line to receive free swag.

- **Discounts:** Discounts can also be an effective non-monetary incentive that will work to keep your most faithful customers buying again and again. To be most attractive, though, we typically recommend these discounts provide at least 30% off the retail price in order to be taken seriously. Offering a 5% discount will barely cover the tax and may not act as a sufficient enough incentive. Within the CrewFire platform, assigning different discount codes to different brand ambassadors is also possible.
- **Shout outs:** Lastly, providing brand ambassadors recognition for what they are doing for your company can serve as a highly motivating non-monetary incentive. If you can think back to school at the thrill of receiving awards in front of your peers, shout outs give brand ambassadors a badge of honors to share with their family, friends, and even work colleagues.



An example of non-monetary rewards in the CrewFire app

The other side of the coin is, of course, monetary incentives. You have a few options here, depending on your brand and business model. Just like with the non-monetary incentives, this is not a one-size-fits-all solution but hopefully I can get you moving in the right direction.

Monetary incentives can include:

- **Commissions:** This is probably the most efficient way to incentivize people since they only get paid for referring a new customer. In this way you are paying for leads (or even paying customers), instead of impressions. But, for this to work, keep in mind you must have a way to track the conversions back to the referring team member. Within the CrewFire app you are able to monitor these in real time.
- **Hourly Pay:** Let me say that this is my least favorite since it usually only motivates people to be physically present for a certain amount of time. But, depending on the nature of work, this may suffice. One word to the wise – If you're not actually going to be there, make sure that you have some sort of system in place to track time and hold people accountable for their work.
- **Results Based:** The second option is to pay on a per unit basis. In other words, you provide X dollars for each unit of Y that is completed. A good example would be the bandit sign street teams that are out posting things like “we buy houses” or political campaign signs. These guys could be paid per sign distributed.

You may still be wondering, though, how do brand ambassadors get paid? If your incentives are non-monetary, like free t-shirts, then brand ambassadors will get paid through the process defined by your program leader or by your company's own internal processes. Conversely, if you're using an app like CrewFire, and are providing monetary incentives to your

ambassadors then payments will be made directly through the platform, requiring little heavy lifting from you.

Outline Your Recruitment Strategy

Lastly, you will want to solidify your recruiting strategically. Specifically, your team will need to decide how to find brand ambassadors and define your recruitment strategy.

Typically, brands can choose from two types of recruitment strategies: cohorts vs. ongoing. You can think of cohorts like a grade in a school. There is a finite beginning and end, and once the cohort is graduated you can easily pause the contract, review how the program went, and make any necessary changes before recruiting the next 'class,' so to speak, of brand ambassadors.

The main benefits of recruiting in cohorts are that you can graduate out lower performing recruits in a seamless manner, as well as invite high performing brand ambassadors back and even leverage them as managers of the program or to orient the new cohorts or freshman (still continuing the eSchool analogy here).

On the other hand, if you have the resources to manage a brand ambassador program on a continual basis, you may consider an ongoing recruitment strategy for brand ambassadors. That means you'll always be accepting and reviewing new applications for brand ambassadors, and will have more orientation events throughout the year as opposed to just one. The main benefit of an ongoing program is you can keep the momentum going. There is no starting and stopping, it's just a snowball that can continue to build and grow and push your brand to further heights. Additionally, it allows your relationship with your brand ambassadors to solidify over a long period of time.

Unfortunately, however, the word is out and a lot more DTC brands are trying to recruit people to act as their ambassadors. The most common recruitment tactics for brand ambassadors take place either online or offline.

Online recruitment can take the form of:

- Embedding a link to your landing page on all social media profiles.
- Sending invite links to repeat customers.
- Embedding a link to your landing page on your website footer.
- Searching your own social media followers.
- Running paid Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook ads.
- Embedding a link to your landing page on the 'Thank You' page at check out.
- Posting on job boards.
- Leveraging technology like [Discoverl.y](#) to see the social media profiles an individual has based solely on an email.

On the other hand, offline recruitment can also be an effective strategy depending on your brand, and can take place as:

- Including invitation flyers in your packaging inserts.
- Hosting recruitment events.
- Passing out business cards.
- Posting flyers in a specific area (popular among college-oriented brands).

Some brands have even had great success recruiting internally, or looking for brand ambassadors among their existing employees. The greatest example of this is [Diana Hunter, who acted as the face of Honey Bunches of Oats](#) for over 30 years. Proceed with caution in this tactic though.

Diana's success as a brand ambassador worked so well because she truly loved the company and its product, and dedicated 40 years of her life to

the brand. If an employee's motivation is misplaced or not centered in their love for the brand, any content they generate may come off as another job requirement to consumers, and potentially have the opposite desired result.

Additionally, there are sites available that serve as databases for people anxious to be brand ambassadors that can offer an excellent resource when trying to look for. These include:

- [Trend](#) - Trend has curated an invite-only network of influencers and potential brand ambassadors. The benefit of using Trend is that participants are pre-vetted before they can apply for your brand, and are available across multiple industries including Beauty, Food, Fashion, Fitness, Technology and more.
- [Buzzsumo](#) - Buzzsumo enables brands to search and identify creators with engaged audiences and authority on Instagram, Twitter and the web using a variety of filters, extending beyond simple 'vanity' metrics, like number of followers.
- [Klear](#) - Klear provides a database of brand ambassadors and influencers with more advanced searching capabilities including enabling discovery by region, language, industry, hashtags, niche topics, past collaborations, influence level and more.
- [Upfluence](#) - Upfluence boasts a database of over 3 million potential brand ambassadors and influencers, that can be searched across a more wide range of platforms including Twitch, Pinterest, Tiktok and blogs. Companies are even able to search for potential ambassadors based on community sizes, engagement rates, languages, and audience demographics.

There are truly an infinite number of ways to recruit your potential brand ambassadors that you will want to consider. If you're still looking for inspiration, check out our [guide outlining 36 tactics](#) you can use to attract potential brand ambassadors

Bonus

Create program assets

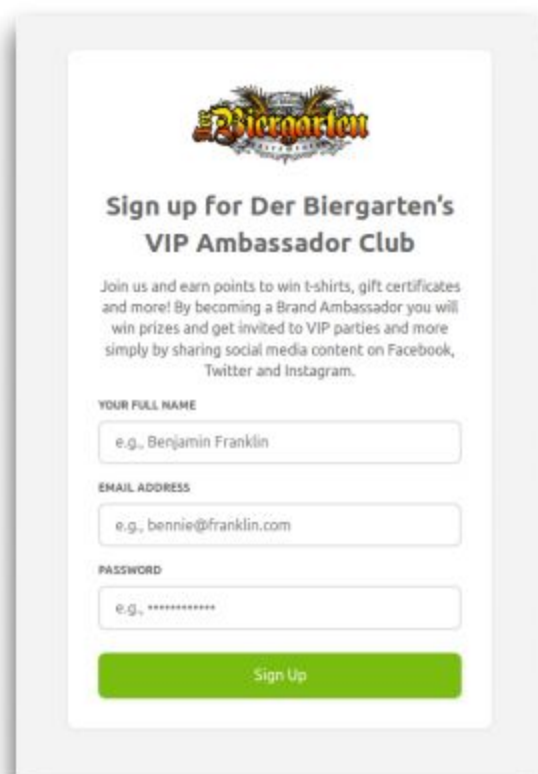
Lastly, as a bonus step to this guide, we recommend that in the pre-launch stage of your brand ambassador program, you also take the time early on to develop all the program materials and assets that will be needed.

- **Program Landing Page**

Use your landing page to reiterate the mission of your company, to emphasize the benefits of the program, and outline the expectations of ambassadors.

Incorporate tantalizing visuals and inspirational copy to get visitors, customers, and brand loyalists excited about the potential of being a brand ambassador.

- **Recruitment Form**



Der Biergarten
EST. 2012

Sign up for Der Biergarten's VIP Ambassador Club

Join us and earn points to win t-shirts, gift certificates and more! By becoming a Brand Ambassador you will win prizes and get invited to VIP parties and more simply by sharing social media content on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

YOUR FULL NAME
e.g., Benjamin Franklin

EMAIL ADDRESS
e.g., bennie@franklin.com

PASSWORD
e.g., *****

Sign Up

Next, you'll want to format your recruitment form. Within your form, you will want to gather basic, yet essential, information including full name, social media handles, and email address.

Additionally, feel free to ask questions to gauge how passionate the individual is about your product or service, how knowledgeable they are of your company and its values, and their level of commitment to the program.

Avoid piling on too many details, legal minutia, and “nots” “don’ts” and “unacceptables.” While you want to be as transparent as possible, introducing these too early on will only work to scare off your next potential brand ambassador. It’s best that these be incorporated somewhere else in the landing page where they can be read separately.

- **Speaking Points**

While your brand ambassadors may act as the face of your company, you still want some level of control of how they represent your brand. One way to make sure everyone is on the same page and that the same message is being disseminated across all your ambassadors is by preparing specific speaking points about your company, its story, its products, and unique selling proposition.

Include within these what you expect the brand ambassadors to say about your brand, as well as what you do not want them or specifically prohibit them from doing while within the program.

- **Ambassador Handbook**

It is also highly recommended that you create some sort of a new team member orientation packet. Depending on your brand and the type of hire, this packet will differ in size and content. However, in general, this book should act as a guide for any potential questions that a brand ambassador may have. It should include information in terms of what they can expect to earn, how to be successful in the program.

It may even go so far as to include a welcome cover letter from the brand owner or program leader directly. These letters can allow your brand's personality to shine, as well as to thank them for joining your cause, welcome them to the team, explain the history of the company, and the direction of the brand.

- **Promotional Assets**

This may sound obvious, but you'll also want to prepare and assemble all the right tools that your brand ambassadors will need to succeed. These can be indoctrination videos, behind the scenes photos, or other company prepared assets.

Will they need a media pass to get into the event? Will they need to know who to contact about the guest list? Will they need digital copies of your flyers or photos from the event? What about login credentials for their new email account?

Ensure that you are setting your ambassadors up for success with whatever materials they will need to complete the planned activities. Don't leave them wondering what's next or where to find materials as this will leave to low engagement for your activities. Assemble these upfront so that you can set ambassadors up to truly hit the ground running.

- **Legal Documentation**

To begin, work with your legal team to establish the legal framework within which your brand ambassador program shall operate. There are certain considerations you will need to take into consideration in terms of licensing, who owns what, who has a right to use what, and the content release forms that you will most likely want to incorporate into the program so that you can use the user-generated content in any future marketing campaign.

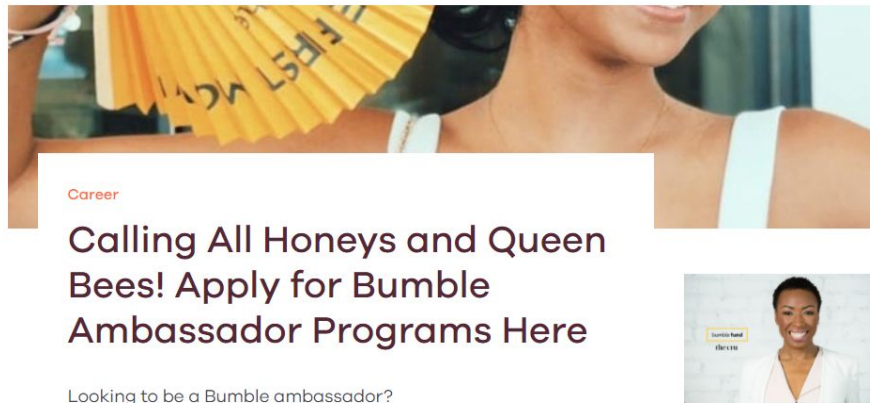
Additionally, you'll want to limit any potential liability to your brand via the actions of your brand ambassadors by outlining the full terms and conditions. Within these, depending on your company's needs, consider incorporating age limitations and full disclosures on the FCC advertising regulations and requirements.

While it initially may sound cumbersome to prepare all these materials, by having them ready, you enable your brand ambassadors to start off on the right foot with a clear path to success. I promise it's worth it. Everyone will be happier, less stressed out and more effective because of it.

Going Live

Announce Your Program

Never assume that once you build they will come. Even the most well designed programs will not work if they sit stale on the shelf, noticed by no one. At this stage, it is so important to go live and get loud about the program. Get the word out in any way possible, leaning on your recruitment strategy, so that you can get those initial applications coming in. Set all your outward facing recruiting assets to live, and make sure to communicate the goals, benefits, and requirements for participation in your program within any medium you use to advertise the program.



An example of Bumble going live with their program through a blog post.

Welcome New Ambassadors

You've launched your program, promoted it, and your team has landed on an initial group of brand ambassadors that they want to work with. Now what?

While it may be tempting to get your team working right away (I mean especially considering all the efforts you've put into the program so far), a common misstep brands make with their brand ambassador programs is to not host some sort of welcome or orientation event for their new ambassadors.

An orientation event is my favorite as it works to build the community you want to create and continue to foster around your brand. How you do it, of course, will depend on your brand, the environment, and nature of work to be done by your team. It can be as simple as a virtual zoom meetup or as extravagant as a catered welcome party can go a long way into solidifying the community you're trying to build.

Through a company hosted event, take the time to properly introduce each new member to the internal team, as well as to new ambassadors.

These events serve as a great venue to provide and go over all promotional assets and reinforce the program's expectations, as well as get to know one another. Above all else, a welcome event sets the tone early on that you care about this brand ambassador community and that they should care about you.



Amazon brand ambassador student orientation

Ongoing Management

Unfortunately, setting up a brand ambassador program is not a one and done situation, but rather a continual process for optimum success. As such we take you through the key steps in managing yours.

Chores

In the ongoing management of your program, there are certain activities or chores that you will need to do to continue to maintain its success.

The first is rotating in fresh activities to keep up with the latest social media and other trends. You've brought on brand ambassadors to remain relevant and in touch with your audience. With social media, what keeps the interest of your audience piqued changes over time, and you will want to ensure that your activities reflect that as well.

Secondly, you will have to begin fulfilling reward orders for your ambassadors. I can not stress enough how important it will be to be responsive in sending out the materials your team has earned. Doing so and doing so quickly, will keep your brand ambassadors motivated and dedicated to the program. Keeping your brand ambassadors waiting for merchandise or payment will send them running to the hills, telling all their social media networks about it, and destroying the program you have worked so diligently to create. This is also why, again, selecting the right tool early on becomes critically important. The better the tool that you have, the more manageable your program becomes.

Thirdly, you most likely will continue to receive new applications from interested people, no matter if you have chosen a cohort or ongoing program. So long as the program is publicized, make sure to continue to process these applications and either provide approvals, rejections, or wait lists.

Maximize Your Program

Now that your program is set up, you will want to leverage your brand ambassadors to the max. The more successful of a program you host, the more likely you are to find an inbox full of new ambassadors, waiting to work alongside your brand.

Let's take a look at how you can consistently be maximizing your program.

Continue Recruiting

It may sound contradictory, but at the highest level, continuing to recruit new ambassadors will enable you to maximize your program. It will add momentum to the snowball effect that your brand ambassador acts as and can really create that viral phenomenon for your brand. It is also vital as it ensures the brand stays fresh, creative, and that you're hearing new perspectives about the program.

Consistent Communication

You can additionally maximize your program by establishing and maintaining regular and constant lines of communication with your team. Continue to provide them ongoing access to digital assets to use (i.e. images, BTS videos, etc.), as well as exclusive company updates. Consider developing a frequently asked questions forum within your tool or online platform of choice that will enable them to search for questions without engaging the program leader, or that can potentially be answered by fellow ambassadors.

Above all else, make sure to disseminate official company announcements and communications on a consistent basis and in one place. Certain brands prefer to use Facebook Groups, as they can dually serve as a digital hangout space to connect, share information, articles, links, gifs etc. Others choose to use email, which while effective for one-on-one communication, may be lost amongst younger brand ambassadors. And even others use SMS notifications which provide very to the point and a great response rate, but don't exactly foster that community vibe.

Our CrewFire platform actually enables you to communicate with your brand ambassadors through all of these, as well as providing a general space to act as the announcement board for your company.

Your program leader will also need to strike a balance between providing too little communication, which can result in a loss of interest among ambassadors, or providing too much communication, which can also cause overload and burnout amongst your participants. We've found that a nice sweet spot is planning out larger campaigns on a monthly cycle.

Foster a Sense of Community

Finally, to maximize your brand ambassador program to its fullest capacity, prioritize keeping your community engaged. Encourage your ambassadors to spark conversations with one another, and reward them for following each other on social media platforms. Invite ambassadors to come up with campaign ideas. Provide brand ambassadors recognition and highlight the content that some of your star players are putting out there. Provide educational content such as free tools or resources that provide brand relevant career or lifestyle advice. Lastly, beta test new products and services with your brand ambassador team, and where possible document these interactions. Your brand ambassadors will feel honored.

Creating a sense of community (offline, online, or both) around your team is so critical because it makes the program more effective and fun. What happens when you hit the gym with a partner? Or cram for a final with a study group? You stay longer, you work harder, you learn from each other, and most importantly – you have more fun! It's no different when it comes to Brand Ambassadors. It encourages and breeds loyalty among your brand ambassador program.

Feedback

An awesome benefit of building a community for your company is the feedback you are able to solicit. As the owner or brand manager you'll have your finger on the pulse of your team simply by participating in your own community. You'll be able to get a really clear picture about what's

working and what's not. This is an extremely important component to any business practice, not just Brand Ambassadors – always get feedback from the people that are taking part.

Along the same lines, providing and soliciting feedback is also critical in leveraging your brand ambassador program. At the end of the day, your brand ambassadors love your company, and want to know how they're doing, if what they're doing is working, and they'll also want to tell you how you're doing as well.

Cycle Out Inactive Ambassadors

While we hope all brand ambassador relationships can last a lifetime, it's also important to plan and know how to end one when the time comes.

You may be wondering why you would need to let go of a brand ambassador, I mean they're committed to your brand right, they even say so by completing all of your activities. Well, as with anything else, time changes things. You may want to consider letting go of an ambassador if content becomes spammy or lacks meaning, and is very clearly made only to game the system of rewards you have set up. You may also want to let go of ambassadors that are not engaging. The whole goal of the program is for the content of your team to generate sales, traffic or engagement and if it's not doing that, then it does not serve anyone to retain them in the program.

How you cycle out inactive ambassadors will likely depend on the initial design of the program. If you have chosen to recruit cohorts, once the cohort period is over, there will be a natural point for you to let people know that they will not be invited back into the next cohort. If, however, you have an ongoing recruitment strategy, make sure to bring up an issue and provide the ambassador an opportunity to make a correction. If there is still no improvement, then it will be time to actually cycle them out.

To actually end the relationship, make sure there is open communication as to why. I mean, at the end of the day, these ambassadors are still your customers, and you want to keep them that way. If it happens to be the case where a brand ambassador is not achieving results, understand why, and if you feel it is appropriate to terminate the relationship, consider conducting an exit interview. If it happens to be the case where you as a brand have decided to go in a different direction, I would equally emphasize explaining the reasons why, providing talking points for your brand ambassadors to convey and keeping all communications as amicable as possible.

Conclusion

Awesome work! You've made it through the most extensive guide on brand ambassadors and the benefits they can provide to your company, as well as the steps you can take to plan, launch, and manage your brand ambassador program.

As you begin to apply what you've learned, always remember that no brand ambassador program is the same. What may work for your competitors or a similar company in your niche, may not work for you. To receive guidance on how to tailor a program specific to your company, feel free to reach out to us directly. We not only specialize in creating a platform to manage your entire brand ambassador program, but also work directly with companies to create unique campaigns.

<https://CrewFire.com/contact>