

3.4.9: Create a Sense of Affinity

Learning Objectives

Use social media to create a sense of affinity

We define *affinity* as “taking a liking to something, often naturally or spontaneously.” Because of the value social media-savvy consumers place on authenticity, contriving something intended to appear “natural” without it actually occurring naturally will be problematic. Nevertheless, creating compelling interactions over social media can certainly attempt and aim at a degree of authenticity that would create affinity for a brand, organization, product, or service.

Related to the concepts of affinity and authenticity is the creation of a narrative or story. This represents a line into marketing, from which we may borrow concepts for use in business communications. Here we leverage the idea of creating a story and narrative in order to gain a type of relationship (affinity) with customers. As discussed before, customers may be internal or external.

- Affinity is taking a spontaneous liking to something.
- Authenticity is a natural “realness” that isn’t contrived or fabricated.
- A story or narrative is a compelling description around a person, brand or organization.

We may consider that in order for a person (a customer) to gain an affinity for your brand or organization, you must create an authentic narrative.

In this 2016 [Harvard Business Review](#) blog post, Ty Montague unpacks what he calls “storytelling” versus “story-doing” organizations. Storytelling organizations describe a great story and even attempt to use that story to energize their customers, but they do not follow through on their own stated values. Story-doing companies, however, both tell a great story and then demonstrate their aligned action. In short, we see that a compelling narrative must be true. There can be no “say-do gap.” Read more about the say-do gap in the article “[Leadership 101: Narrow Your Say-Do Gap.](#)” While this may seem like common sense, Montague found that of 42 studied publicly traded companies, storytelling companies outnumber storydoing companies 5 to 1.

Learn More

Read this article on Sujan Patel’s marketing blog: [7 Companies That are Killing It with Brand-Driven Storytelling](#)

Starbucks

Starbucks is the first store that comes to mind when people think about national coffee shop chains—after all, there are over 13,000 locations in the United States alone. In fact, in some cities, you can be within walking distance of 30 different Starbucks locations at once.

Starbucks (like any large organization) is often viewed as a large corporation taking away business from its smaller competitors or taking away the identity and character of smaller towns it moves into. As we mentioned earlier, there’s no way to change perception without actions, so Starbucks is taking action to show its dedication to social improvement. In fact, if you visit their website, one of the main sections along their top menu is [Starbucks’ Social Impact page](#), right alongside their lists of coffee, tea, and menu items.

In 2018, as a part of their social mission, Starbucks announced a change in the way they deliver their drinks: they will use cups made from all recyclable material and stop using plastic straws by 2020:

We’re removing plastic straws in our stores globally by 2020—reducing more than 1 billion plastic straws per year from our stores.

— Starbucks Coffee (@Starbucks) July 9, 2018

If you read through the comments, you can see Starbucks replying to concerns about not having a straw option, letting customers know that there will be straws available for those who need them but that the straws will be made of alternative materials. Starbucks also recently announced their first US Signing Store on Twitter:

Coming this fall in Washington, D.C.: our first U.S. Signing Store, creating jobs and driving greater connection with the Deaf and hard of hearing community: t.co/aOWJKErx35pic.twitter.com/39N0HuIGVL

— Starbucks Coffee (@Starbucks) July 19, 2018

If you watch the video in the tweet, the video has captions—indicating there is no audio—as well as video description for those who are visually impaired. With this tweet, Starbucks shows that it’s willing to take the time to ensure all their customers are welcome, regardless of their physical abilities.

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