The Impact of Advocate Marketing on Product Reviews

A Study of The Merits and Methods of Advocate Marketing for B2B Vendors.
Introduction

In partnership with Influitive, G2 presents this study of the merits and methods of advocate marketing.

In order to study the effects of advocate marketing on customer populations, G2 analyzed the behavior of hundreds of thousands of site visitors and reviewers, comparing the performance of products of companies that use advocate marketing to an average product listed on the website. This study demonstrates that companies that utilize advocate marketing have successfully maximized the potential of their G2 listings. They have more reviews, are better positioned, receive more page views, and receive more leads through the G2 website than other products.

A special thanks to Influitive for providing valuable data about their customer base, which made this study possible.

Advocate Marketing

Really, advocate marketing begins when the marketing team acknowledges that buyers are smart. Buyers realize that a first-rate ad campaign doesn’t guarantee a high-quality product and that celebrity spokespeople probably care more about their check than customer success. They pay attention to these marketing tactics, but they’re not going to trust them the way they trust a personal recommendation from a colleague. Nielsen’s much-touted “Consumer Trust in Advertising” study shows that...

...while consumer trust has increased in recent years across the marketing spectrum, “recommendations from people I know” remains the most trusted form of brand discovery and “consumer opinions posted online” comes in at third most trusted.
Additionally, this McKinsey & Company study found that the primary factor that determined 20–50% of all purchasing decisions was consumer-to-consumer communication. Acknowledging that your own customers are your best advertisers, advocate marketing prompts customers to engage with your brand, encourages conversation, and makes recommending your product and referring others to your company a smooth and rewarding experience.

A C-Suite Network survey of professional services firms found that nearly 62% of respondents said that generating more referrals was their top marketing initiative for 2015. But a study by Brightlocal shows that 85% of buyers read up to 10 online reviews before making a purchase. What’s more, Forrester found that one-third of online buyers trust a stranger more than a brand and, corroborating the Nielsen study, that a review of a product was almost as trustworthy as a personal recommendation. The Internet has crowdsourced the personal recommendation, and no informed consumer will go near a product that no one is talking about.

Companies that utilize **advocate marketing** receive as much as:

- **17.5 x** product reviews
- **3.5 x** page visits to their product profiles
- **+200%** sales leads

85% of buyers read up to 10 online reviews **before** making a purchase.

20–50% of all purchasing decisions were determined by consumer-to-consumer communication.
Step 1: Identifying Advocates

The first step in advocate marketing is identifying which of your customers will be a vocal user of your product. Locating and connecting with customers who have already taken to social media and the blogosphere to discuss your brand is an obvious place to start. However, probably the simplest method is to just ask upon purchase and in follow-ups if they are willing to refer and review your product. A Texas Tech University study found that 83% of buyers are willing to refer but only 29% actually do. Identifying that 83% by using a simple, one-question survey can be the first step to utilizing your advocate army later on. (For more tips on how to encourage high-quality reviews, check out this blog post from Influitive.)

Step 2:  
**Sustaining Relationships**  
Now that you know who your advocates are, it is important for your brand to stay top of mind with them. Just because they’re using your product doesn’t mean they are actively thinking about the benefits it offers them, updates and improvements that are being perfected on their behalf, or the dedicated support your company offers when they need it. A study by Deloitte found that brand advocates on average spend two times as much as an ordinary customer and the Wharton School found that the “Life-Time Value of a referral customer (LVC) is more than 16% higher than non-referred customers.” These are important relationships to sustain. They’re valuable regardless of any additional customers they send your way.

Step 3:  
**Encouraging Conversation**  
Next, encourage advocates to join in the conversation about your products and your brand. Include calls to action that involve forwarding content, including your products in a blog post, or linking to your site in a tweet. BzzAgent found that brand advocates are prolific content creators. They write and share more than twice as many online communications about brands than do non-advocates. Furthermore, they are 70% more likely to be seen as a good source of information by people around them. Make their access to valuable content about your brand easy and sharing it rewarding.
Step 4: Gathering Referrals

It makes sense that a referral is going to be more valuable to a salesperson than your average lead. The referee is going to trust the recommendation and be willing to engage in a conversation about purchasing the product, and the salesperson already knows that a current customer has evaluated the referee’s situation and believes your product will be valuable and worthwhile to purchase. MathMarketing confirmed this hunch in a study that showed marketers who use referral marketing have higher marketing-qualified lead (MQL) closure rates than those who use purchased lists. Having a way to elicit and gather referrals from your advocates that is gratifying for all parties will ensure that the potential 83% of customers who would refer actually do and that you can cater your response to those potential future customers who have been referred.

“Marketers who use referral marketing have higher marketing-qualified lead (MQL) closure rates than those who use purchased lists.”
Advocate Marketing Software

The digital age has splintered buyers’ sources of information and democratized expertise. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the modern marketer. According to a survey by the Opinion Research Corporation, 84% of Americans say online reviews influence their purchasing decisions. In addition to review sites, social media and the blogosphere are teeming with user-created content about the products they use and services they utilize. The days of a tight grasp on brand positioning are over, and controlling the maelstrom of digital discussion of your products and services is near impossible. However, now there are hundreds of new ways to connect with your customers as well as hundreds of new ways that your brand advocates can do the legwork for you. Trusting in your customer base and facilitating the online conversation are essential to maintaining a healthy brand.
Advocate marketing software platforms leverage game dynamics to automate an advocate marketing strategy in a scalable way. They invite advocates to engage with brand content, and nurture their relationship through exclusive access, networking opportunities, and status amongst their peers. They encourage users to share their content and opinions with their colleagues, with their social media followers, and on review sites. They also make the referral process quick and painless. By gamifying these opportunities to contribute to a brand’s marketing strategy with rewards and incentives, brands can grow their army of advocates and mobilize them to bolster their marketing campaigns whenever they need.

“Write a Review” challenges can be posted to Influitive’s advocate marketing module to engage customers across online venues.
Advocacy, Influitive, and G2

G2 is the largest B2B review site, and it leverages more than 270,000* user reviews to drive better purchasing decisions. Technology buyers, investors, and analysts use the site to compare and select the best software based on peer reviews and synthesized social data. The site contains product listings, gathers reviews, ranks products, and collects leads for vendors.

Software users share their experience with and feedback on the tools they use every day on G2’s online review platform.
Unequivocally, products with more reviews perform better on G2. Users trust the opinions of their peers, and the more opinions about a product they have access to, the more time they will spend sifting through information and getting to know that brand. A product page without any reviews performs poorly on search engines and lacks the information that users are looking for: trusted and unbiased user-submitted product information.

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**Influitive**

As a B2B advocate marketing and engagement platform, Influitive identifies a company’s advocates and encourages them to engage in online conversation about that company’s products or services. Software companies have utilized the Influitive platform to manage a successful G2 listing, either by generally encouraging a culture of online conversation with their customers or through targeted online review-gathering campaigns. By prompting their customers to be prolific and honest with their feedback, they gain the trust and confidence of both their customer base and future prospects.

For example, the project management tool, Wrike, had a respectable 31 reviews and was situated as a High Performer for project management software products on November 4, 2014. But by creating a “Write a G2 Review” achievement in their Influitive module, they gathered more than 100 reviews in 24 hours. This large review volume bolstered their market presence and pushed them across the line into the Leaders quadrant. The added confidence by way of a large customer sample secured their highest satisfaction rating among project management tools on the site.
A study of the 114 Influitive customers on G2 found that these results are not atypical. Influitive customers on average have more reviews, are better positioned, receive more page views, and receive more leads than other products in their category.

*Data pulled December 2017

## G2 GridSM for Project Management

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### Grid® Scoring

- **Satisfaction**
- **Market Presence**

**Wrike** (Spring '15)
Reviews

The key to a successful product listing is gathering reviews. This demonstrates that this product is one that people are using and is worth talking about. It delivers information from trusted sources about the product, and gives users a reason and time to get to know the brand. The average Influitive customer has 4.5 times as many reviews as the average product in their category (35.7 more reviews), and Influitive customers who have launched their advocate marketing program using Influitive’s AdvocateHub software have 4.8 times as many (38.3 more reviews).

Vendors can claim their product profiles on G2 and manage some of the information listed there, and the average Influitive customer who has claimed their product profile has 173.33 times as many reviews as the average product (6.10 reviews). Moreover, the average Influitive customer who has run a review-gathering campaign with G2 has 17.5 times as many reviews as the average product on G2 (140.1 more reviews).

| Influitive customers who have performed a review-gathering campaign | 148.1 |
| Influitive customers who have claimed their product page | 67.7 |
| Live Influitive customers | 46.3 |
| All Influitive customers | 43.7 |
| Average product | 8 |
Grid Placement

Because review volume shows that a product has greater market share and increases G2’s confidence in their satisfaction ratings, it would follow that Influitive customers also achieve a better grid placement. Indeed, on average, they are ranked slightly higher in terms of user satisfaction as well as market presence. Out of 100, Influitive customers score 19.72 points higher in satisfaction and 5.32 points higher in market presence.

Out of 100, Influitive customers score

19.72 points higher in satisfaction

5.3 points higher in market presence

Influitive customers receive

3.5 x average page visits
Leads

G2 users have the option to contact vendors directly through a product’s page. The average Influitive customer received 4.92 more leads per month than the average product on G2. The average number of leads for Influitive customers is just shy of 600 per month.

Influitive customers who have launched their advocate marketing program received on average 5.5 more leads. Influitive customers who have claimed their product pages received 14.4 more. And Influitive customers who have run a review-gathering campaign with G2 received 59.3 more leads and demo requests. That is a 200% increase in lead volume per year for Influitive customers who have performed a review-gathering campaign.

Influitive customers who have performed a review-gathering campaign

Influitive customers who have claimed their product page

Live Influitive customers

All Influitive customers

Average product

200% increase in lead volume per year

The average Influitive customer has 4.92 more leads

Influitive customers who have:

- launched their advocate marketing program received 5.5 more leads
- claimed their product pages received 14.4 more leads
- run a review-gathering campaign with G2 received 59.3 more leads

Average

Influitive

G2

Influitive

product

page

Live

All

Average
Conclusion

Companies that utilize Influitive to implement their advocate marketing initiatives successfully develop their public product listings on third-party sites such as G2. By recognizing and engaging customer advocacy, companies increase by as much as 17.5 times the number of reviews of their products. They then reap the benefits of increased brand awareness through 3.5 times as many page visits and a wider marketing funnel through an increase in sales leads by as much as 200%.

Schedule a demo with Influitive or G2!