

Brand Believers Series

Employee believers are essential to your brand's success

Some media portrayals of company culture and employee buy-in—particularly in shows like *Silicon Valley*—have inflated the concepts to absurd levels (for great comedic effect). Yet, there's still some truth to these depictions: every successful brand needs their Employee Believers.

In our previous article, we examined the death of consumers' brand loyalty and the new "brand believer." Here, we're turning that perspective inward to *employee* believers—why they're instrumental to brand belief and why recruiting and retention should be top brand priorities.

Employee believers—defining and understanding their importance

We previously defined brand believers as "a focused group of your customers who have a shared set of interests, values or beliefs in views about your brand." The same applies to your employee believers.

Brand belief is rooted in authentic relationships that employees and customers form with you out of those shared qualities. (Think Harley Davidson's dedicated subculture or REI's Co-op Membership.) But while every brand aspires to cultivate a fervent group of believers, more fail than succeed.

Ultimately, success depends on whether people have something to connect *with*. You can't expect authentic relationships to form without that element. And since your employees represent the brand, they're overwhelmingly responsible for creating resonant experiences—through in-person interactions, marketing content, order fulfillment and more.

In effect, your employees' interactions with customers become your authenticity "litmus test" based on how they help facilitate your company's purpose (i.e., why you exist beyond making money).

Any brand can position itself however it wants, but does that positioning hold up during customer engagements? Or will they have jarring experiences that don't reflect expectations?

And are your brand strategy choices aimed at preserving that authenticity throughout a customer's lifetime relationship? Start straying without a reason (or one beyond the bottom line), and brand believers will, too.

Employee belief in action

Let's revisit the REI example above to see how it can go *right*.

When customers interact with REI employees, there's a strong chance they'll meet someone who shares similar interests in the outdoors (and related concerns like environmental protection). The only difference between the customer and the employee might be the latter's name tag. The result is more relatability than pre-written talking points or Unique Selling Propositions could ever achieve.

"Oh, I've used those La Sportiva climbing shoes for months and *adore* them! Highly recommend! But you said this is your first pair? Those have a pretty aggressive arch you might find uncomfortable for a while, so you might want to try one of these instead. I used that pair of Scarpas when I started out, and they were great."

There's an irreplicable enthusiasm and genuineness that employee believers automatically convey. But adding that sentiment requires recruiting and retaining those who convey it. And as customers come to recognize and expect that resonance, employee believer retention becomes increasingly important to your long-term brand strategy.

Company loyalty is dead, but employee belief thrives

Like brand loyalty, company loyalty is dead. And recent labor market commentary aside, it's been dead for decades. Your parents' or grandparents' nostalgic advice about spending a half-century with one company before a pension-supported retirement has become increasingly divorced from reality [since the 70s](#).

But belief and values haven't suffered loyalty's fate, and employees can still find brands that share qualities resonating with them. The brands simply have to put the work in first.

The same "mindset territories" used to identify brand believers also work for employees. You're looking for a core group across demographics that exhibits a shared mindset aligning with your brand beliefs. That belief can span myriad qualities, such as:

- Company purpose
- Company values
- Brand promise
- Personality
- Social or environmental consciousness
- Special interests

Go beyond stats with mindset territories

Belief doesn't always show itself through demographic data. So, while you should always consider that information, you must also look beyond it to find believers.

For example, how would a company selling hand-operated coffee grinders identify believers? You could start by examining the product experience. Is there something implied about people who use them? Is the purchase itself symbolic?

Perhaps it's choosing something manual and inherently more time-consuming over commonplace electric alternatives or pre-ground coffee. There's likely a common appreciation for artisanal craftsmanship, elevated experiences and preserving personal moments.

Those are the types of mindset territories you're looking to explore (or "reverse engineer").

Strategies for recruiting and retaining employee believers

Once you've identified your employee believers, it's time to start recruiting them—and retaining those you've already hired. Broadly, you'll rely on these steps:

1. **Assess your brand from the employee's perspective**—What is your employee value proposition (EVP)—both extrinsic (e.g., rewards) and intrinsic (e.g., personal meaning and values)? Does it reflect

what your believers are seeking? If not, it's the same as inauthentically positioning yourself to customers. Ideally, you're the immediate answer when someone's asked where they want to work.

2. **Begin incorporating more data into your mindset territories**—What do your current employee believers value (in real life or online), and how do they communicate? These and other characteristics blend with your mindset territories to inform your recruiting strategy.
3. **Implement a dedicated retention strategy**—You must create advancement and retention structures for believers. Simply put, company loyalty is dead largely because workers know [hiring budgets are often bigger](#) than retention counterparts. A new job often delivers better compensation much faster than staying in place. But belief in a company's purpose can transcend monetary gain—if it's delivered on.

Employee believers need experiences that reciprocate their belief and reasons to stay—whether it's personal recognition or a company purpose and culture they're legitimately invested in.

And if you haven't built structures to track and reward performance (e.g., employee review data, personal check-ins) or provide professional development (e.g., education or training opportunities), believers' eyes likely still wander.

Modern brands—built on employee and customer belief

Today's successful brands target people who share beliefs, values and interests. But those customers' experiences fall flat if the brand's employees aren't on the same wavelength. It's why recruiting and retaining employee believers is so crucial to positive brand reputation and creating authentic, resonant relationships with the right audience.

Sources:

Knowledge at Wharton. *Is Workplace Loyalty Gone for Good?*

<https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/is-workplace-loyalty-gone-for-good/>

SHRM. *Wages Stall as Companies Spend Generously to Recruit, Not Retain.*

<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/compensation/pages/wages-stall-as-companies-spent-generously-to-recruit-not-retain.aspx>

Designing your believers

Despite the omnipresence of one-dimensional customer personas, many brands still struggle to precisely identify how to connect their brand to a single macro audience. But if you're familiar with this challenge, you might be looking at it the wrong way.

What if you could *design* your customer instead?

Rather than a specific persona (e.g., "Dave" is a systems administrator, age 45, has two kids and a suburban house and enjoys functional technology that makes his work life easier), you should seek to understand "mindset territories" based on psychographics and specific traits shared across your target audience.

The mindsets are essential ingredients for designing your believer profile. Brand messaging and experiences based on a believer profile improve resonance with your primary audience—whether customers or employees—and help cultivate the authentic relationships and brand belief every company seeks.

So, how do you get started designing your believers?

How are mindset territories built?

The goal with mindset territories is to identify two or three that collectively describe your brand believers before extensively refining and narrowing data. For simplicity, you can break it down into three stages.

Stage 1: Gather information

Information gathering begins the process, typically via surveys. You can build these surveys by brainstorming questions based on customer psychographics—characteristics like beliefs, lifestyles and other motivations influencing how people self-identify, what they need from you and how they belong as a group.

Crucially, survey participants must be relevant to your brand and market to prevent data pollution. Combining existing customers and a targeted market audience provides a good starting place.

Stage 2: Statistical analysis

Next, statistically analyze the gathered information to understand what mindset territories exist among your ideal customers, grouped thematically by consistent survey responses. Specifically, "factor analysis" helps reveal all their latent customer traits, values and aspirations.

But which mindset territories are most relevant to your brand?

Determining that answer requires more rounds of statistical analysis, namely:

- **Cluster analysis**—Narrow the survey-revealed mindset territories down to a group of three to six that exhibit similarities or compatibility (despite their distinctions).
- **Regression analysis**—Revisit how the mindset territories within your smaller subset remain individually distinct from the others. The aim is to understand what uniquely identifies each via their defining characteristic—the primary underlying trait revealed through psychographics.

Stage 3: Establish mindset territories

Finally, it's time to refine your shortlist of mindset territories. From your shortlist, choose two or three to create your brand believer profile based on how they align with the defining characteristics your statistical analysis uncovers.

Revisit the survey analysis to flesh out the story for a data-backed character profile directly tied to each mindset territory, naming and better describing it. For example, you may end up with the following for a high-end, minimalist camping equipment brand:

- **“The anachronistic adventurer”**—Views camping excursions as their regular escape—a haven from the constant input of data-driven daily life—and, thus, seeks the most simplistic, old-school-inspired equipment to accompany their trail-worn Hemmingway novels.
- **“The occasional outdoorsman”**—Wishes for more frequent exploration, but it's not possible between juggling work, kids and other pursuits—so they need simple, low-maintenance gear that holds up despite light cleaning, parenthood perils and extended storage.
- **“The weightless wilderness wanderer”**—Favors extended backpacking trips and off-trail amblings to explore the unknown, placing utmost priority on as-light-as-possible and minimalist-yet-multipurpose gear to follow their curiosity unencumbered.

Alongside creativity, keep your mindset territories rooted in the traits, values and aspirations your statistical analysis uncovered. Regard them as icebergs—even in no-number descriptions, mindset territories remain overwhelmingly statistics-based.

What mindset territories are and aren't

Mindset territories—and, more specifically, your believer profile—intertwine with your strategy, acting as its muse. They provide a “north star” for high-level brand strategy and messaging (e.g., taglines, advertising), ensuring they resonate with target audiences regardless of any adaptations for more granular segmentation.

In fact, this strategic lens minimizes both overarching and segment-specific challenges, like concerns over alignment with or adequate coverage of each segment. The profiles identify and aggregate common threads across all potential brand believers aligned with various mindset territories—indicating whether people across multiple territories are likely to believe in your brand and how to determine both high-level and granular strategies for connecting with them.

Swarming—from mindset territories to believer profiles

If creating mindset territories represents the science of brand belief, “swarming” and designing your believer profile represents its art. Rooted in [REDACTED]'s [REDACTED] method (a combination of design thinking and agile methodologies), swarming enables teams to co-create an aggregate of your most pertinent mindset territory traits—transforming them into your brand believer profile.

Swarming starts with “divergent thinking,” where individuals are each assigned a duo of possible mindset territories to reflect, analyze and expand on—with prompts like “How would other customers aspire to be

more like the group?” or “How would targeting this audience help improve the brand?” Pre-assigning the territories helps remove inherent biases and gut reactions to what the data portrays, as some mindset territories may counter expectations.

The team then collaborates in smaller groups via “convergent thinking,” aggregating their work before repeating this process again with the entire team. This enables the co-creation of a true brand believer profile rather than one person’s perception of the mindset territory—which is crucial because the believer profile represents an aggregate as well.

Brand belief based on science and art

Rudimentary personas lack the critical, actionable insight brands need to identify and target their believers. Without the psychographic components examining the traits, values and aspirations behind their buying behaviors, you won’t learn how to connect with them and form meaningful relationships. Moreover, without extensive statistical analysis, you’ll lack the evidence to confidently pursue them.

But data-based insights still require an artful approach to transform them from numbers to a humanized aggregate—the brand believer profile—that is necessary to inspire communications and connection.

What follows believer profile creation is the subject of our next series article: Activating your brand believer profile and testing that activation to ensure it and your messaging truly resonate with the believers you’ve uncovered.

Sources:

Qualtrics. *What is psychographic segmentation? A beginner’s guide.*

<https://www.qualtrics.com/experience-management/brand/psychographic-segmentation/>

Activating Your Believers

Building your believer profile is an exercise in understanding your ideal customer (and employee) audience's psychographics—or the traits, values, and aspirations that drive their buying (or job) behavior. And with the profile established, you're positioned to activate your brand or a given initiative that embodies it (e.g., new product, new recruitment strategy).

Now that launch time approaches, how do you get started?

#1 Build an activation plan

Brands can choose any manner of activations, but they typically involve at least one of the following among the holistic effort:

- **Brand anthem video**—Communicate a distillation of your brand and its strategy to help customers and employees readily recognize, understand and begin connecting with the brand.
- **Brand campaign**—Your brand must announce (or reannounce) itself to the market. Depending on your business model and goals, this may be geared more toward awareness and education, or it could prioritize conversions to help your audience directly connect with a product, service, or customer experience.
- **Website redesign**—It's imperative that your website's look, feel, content and functionality align with your brand activation to reinforce your audience's understanding and relationship formation. Every engagement must be aligned with your brand strategy, and as the central digital hub for your brand, your website is one of the most essential locations and assets for creating that consistency.

When designing your activations, refer to the believer profile to determine the best methods to connect with those believers—specifically, consider the delivery methods that meet their preferences and their favorite digital and physical locations. Your activation must meet your audience where they already are, in a manner they find both accessible and compelling.

Brand relaunch vs. rebrand

Notably, the activations your brand chooses generally remain consistent whether or not you've conducted a rebrand.

If your existing brand and strategy already align with your believers, the challenge has likely been generating awareness or effective marketing. In that case, a "relaunch" is needed through activations that help reach a broader or more targeted audience and better convey your brand's identity, purpose and promise to them.

Following a rebrand, you need to inform your existing customer base about the changes and continue connecting with them. Few brands successfully transition by ignoring or abandoning their current customers. At the same time, you'll seek relationships with the believers that best align with your new strategy. For this audience, your brand may be unfamiliar or you're looking to reset their perceptions, so the activation still resembles a new launch.

#2 Design activations based on the believer profile you've built

After the activation is planned, your creative and marketing teams will begin developing it. Being based on your specific brand strategy and believer profile, this stage will be relatively unique to your brand, but it's crucial that the believer profile guides and inspires your activation's content to best ensure it resonates with them.

Remember to regard the profile as both your creative team's muse and their target audience throughout the creative process.

#3 Test activation concepts and messaging using your believers

As the last step before an official launch, you'll want to test your activation's concepts and messaging to ensure they resonate with your believers. This involves "mixed methods testing"—or, a combination of both qualitative and quantitative assessments—to gather the most insightful data.

Having identified your believers, you've affixed the crucial variable to understanding how to effectively form meaningful, authentic relationships with them. That fixed variable allows you to then directly assess your brand activation's concepts and messaging with them to ensure it resonates with your most valuable group of customers. Simply put, you've identified your ideal focus group.

With all the work leading up to this stage, your testing should demonstrate your audience is connecting with your brand, product or service. There may be a few minor adjustments to perfect the activation, but it should be nearly ready to go live.

However, if brands don't build their believer profile at the start, these tests may hinder more than they help. Activation concepts and messaging creation aside—without a believer profile, it'll be difficult to gather a focus group representing them for testing accuracy. If your group is assembled at random, their feedback will orient you away from your believers. Unfortunately, many brands take this misstep and test among random participants.

Mixed methods—User testing by situation

A mixed methods testing approach leverages both qualitative and quantitative assessments to gather the most insight. Ideally, you have the time and resources to complete both in a serial order. This is because qualitative testing is better performed first among smaller focus groups to finalize your activation's concepts and messaging before quantitative testing evaluates their performance at scale.

The specific tests you perform depend on a comparison of the risk associated with your activation or a given initiative launching and its cost:

- **Low risk, low cost**—With lower stakes in both, most brands can simply perform an in-market, real-time test to gather feedback. For example, you may launch a brand campaign with A/B testing to evaluate activation concepts and messaging performance.
- **High risk, low cost**—Before performing an in-market test, you'll want to take advantage of the lower go-to-market costs to build a prototype and see how your brand believers respond to every facet of the activation.

- **Low risk, high cost**—Before investing substantial resources, brands can hedge against high go-to-market costs by performing an “ingredient test” to ensure the right building blocks comprise the activation’s conceptual foundation. Then, concept test the activation to ensure it still resonates once assembled.
- **High risk, high cost**—When the stakes are the highest, you’ll want to perform each test mentioned here serially. Start with ingredient testing among your brand believer focus group before confirming the activation’s concepts with concept testing. Then, create a prototype for them to evaluate before finally performing an in-market, real-time test.

By working with your brand believers to develop your activation pre-launch, you’ll best ensure it will resonate and connect with them once live.

All that’s left is the launch and monitoring performance metrics for further fine-tuning.

Tracking Your Believers

Our series on brand believers has explored how to create (or identify) and activate this essential customer audience. But brands still need to monitor their relationships with this core group over time to ensure they retain that belief throughout their decision-making, investments and future activations.

And if you subscribe to the concept of brand believers, then you need to reevaluate how you track your audience.

Even when brands track their customers, they tend to rely on traditional metrics and approaches rather than gauging believers' relationship strength—the most important measure for brand strategy. So, let's examine why tracking brand believers is so important, why traditional metrics don't quite measure up and what approach to use.

Pay attention to your most important audience segment

Simply put, brand believers must be tracked more diligently than other audience segments because they're the most important. Other segments may be larger, but what believers provide brands is invaluable: external validation and authenticity.

Brand legitimacy requires believers whose lives reflect its values and mission and who prominently advocate for the brand. These individuals function as a brand community's core and draw others in who aspire to the same lifestyles.

For example, consider Harley-Davidson customers—one of the most prominent brand communities. Despite the brand's associations with freedom, rebelliousness, and (outlaw) motorcycle club culture, most customers are [older men](#) with enough disposable income to purchase and maintain its product.

The customer base providing Harley-Davidson with most of its revenue doesn't reflect the protagonists of *Easy Rider* or *The Wild One* in their day-to-day lives. But the believers who do legitimize and reinforce everyone else's understanding of the brand.

If you alienate your believers (or don't track their relationship with the brand), you risk damaging your entire customer base by losing its core. And if you lose believers and—by extension—brand authenticity, then more customers will follow their departure.

Traditional metrics will provide limited help with tracking believers

Brand belief relies on a foundation of psychographics (i.e., the beliefs, lifestyles and other factors motivating buying behavior), measuring which requires a greater emphasis on appropriately segmenting feedback and your qualitative understanding of customers. As simple demographics aren't enough to identify your believers, neither is purely quantitative data for measuring their brand relationships.

Moreover, since brand believers don't comprise your largest audience segment, filtering data based on the majority's sentiment doesn't provide the targeted insight brands need. You need to discern which customer responses should be given the most weight for analysis.

So, traditional metrics like simple customer satisfaction ratings and net promoter scores (NPS) won't help with assessing brand believer relationships. They're too affected by recency bias and uncontrollable customer experience factors, while also lacking the full context needed to understand emotional connections.

How to track your brand believers

Properly tracking brand believers starts with correctly identifying and separating their data and feedback from among all customers. This is best achieved by conducting regular surveys that feature typing tools (i.e., questions specifically used to enable respondents' self-segmentation) and qualitative relationship questions.

Developing typing tools

The best method for segmenting audience feedback by believers is to let them self identify when providing it. Including questions that target customers' psychographics and the motivations behind their buying behavior filters responses more effectively than trying to carve out segments after extensive data has been collected.

Return to your believer profile (and the mindset territories that informed it) to begin composing these typing tools. The research, statistical analysis and understanding that informs your believer profile will provide the best starting place—enabling you to reverse engineer survey questions.

The aim with these typing tools is to determine how strongly aligned respondents are with the profile. So, for example, an athletic wear company might ask customers to rate how important "being an athlete" is to their personal identity. If the brand's strategy identified serious and dedicated athletes as their believers (who draw in more casual exercisers with the legitimacy they give the brand), survey responses that answered that question with a higher rating should be given more weight when analyzing believer relationships.

Go-to options and level of connection

In addition to typing tools, every survey designed to track believers should feature qualitative relationship questions—particularly, whether customers consider the brand as their "go-to option" and what level of connection they feel with it.

Your true brand believers will always regard you as their primary choice whenever faced with a purchasing decision. However, being customers' "go-to option" alone doesn't necessarily demonstrate the relationship's depth—as it's not uncommon for people making choices to pick their "least worst" option and the death of customer loyalty means they're merely waiting for a brand to come along and provide experiences that resonate with them more. That's why it's essential to also assess the emotional connection's strength.

Brands can further expand on these two questions by directly asking customers questions pertaining to its mission, values, and what they think the ideal customer is. Their answers will help illuminate whether your activations have successfully communicated these attributes to your customer base and that they continue to resonate with them.

Benchmarking against competitors

As important as it is to assess brand believers' relationship with your brand, it's equally crucial to gauge their relationship with your competitors by including a few relevant questions (e.g., if not [Brand], which company is your go-to option). Not only does this provide a better baseline understanding of your brand's relationship

with potential believers, but it allows you to gather further insight into what they're seeking from their brand relationships and how you can better deliver that experience.

Brand belief requires better tracking

Following the death of customer loyalty, the brand believer concept provides a much better and more qualitative method for understanding your most important customers and audience segments. Naturally, traditional metrics designed to measure customer loyalty don't quite provide insight necessary because they aren't similarly based in psychographics. So, how you assess brand believers requires an approach with more precision and qualitative insight into customer motivations and relationships.

Sources:

Starting Business. *What Can We Learn From Harley-Davidson's Marketing Failures?*

<https://www.startingbusiness.com/blog/marketing-strategy-harley-davidson>

Nobody's Loyal These Days—So, Cultivate Brand Belief

We've entered a new era in brand-customer relationships, one in which the concept of brand loyalty no longer applies. Instead, individuals constantly look for and shift to brands that reflect and resonate with their values, lifestyles and self-image and can deliver their ideal experiences. And when customers find these brands demonstrating their genuineness through repeat engagements, they form authentic relationships.

They form belief.

More specifically—brands cultivate belief when continually reinforcing what they mean to customers across all audience engagements. Brands must truly embody their meaning, crafting experiences and making decisions based on a holistic strategy that demonstrates authenticity through consistency. It's a perspective and methodology that we've thoroughly examined in our series, but here we'll bring all those concepts back together.

Identifying and understanding your believers

Brand believers comprise your most important audience segment, as:

- Their lifestyle, values, and other psychographic motivations (i.e., the drivers behind buyer behavior and decision-making) best reflect your brand's.
- Based on their brand experience, they evangelize on your behalf and provide external validation by attesting to a brand's authenticity.
- They represent a group others aspire to be like, drawing in more customers.
- Alienating your believers leads to losing brand authenticity and external validation, which leads to losing the other customers previously drawn in by the believers.

However, believers might be tricky to identify and understand because they're unlikely to be the largest segment or demographically homogeneous. This is because brand belief is built on psychographics and the understanding that individuals seek out brands that resonate with themselves.

Since this approach primarily deals with how customers (and employees and candidates) think and make decisions—most brands aren't equipped with the necessary data or perspective. Brands looking to identify, understand, activate and track their believers will need to employ extensive research, target audience surveys, psychographics, statistical analysis and historical performance.

Building the believer profile

There's a few steps between compiling your research and data and producing the profile that describes and characterizes your believers.

To start, the research and audience survey data must be statistically analyzed to group respondents into "mindset territories." Specifically, a sequence of factor, cluster and regression analysis first reveals latent audience psychographics, separates respondents into similar groups and then determines the group's

defining characteristic that distinguishes them from others. Then, a few of the mindset territories are selected and aggregated according to brand strategy and various stakeholders' expertise to make the profile.

This mindset territory selection and aggregation is more complicated than merely picking favorites, however. The process involves group participation through successive "swarming" rounds—where stakeholders individually make decisions (i.e., divergent thinking) and then collectively reconcile them (i.e., convergent thinking) according to brand strategy to reach a consensus. At [REDACTED], we've coined this process as [REDACTED].

Employee believers—A crucial audience

It's crucial to remember that believers include more than customers. In fact, your employees and candidates may prove to be the most important believers despite brands often making the mistake of exclusively focusing on customer relationships.

There are three major reasons for employee and candidate believers' importance:

1. Working within the company, employees will be the first to notice brand inauthenticity—or discrepancies between how the brand presents itself and reality.
2. Employees often hold roles as brand representatives in customer engagements; employees' brand belief positively impacts customer experiences, further validates authenticity (customers typically notice faux enthusiasm) and reinforces relationships.
3. Strong employee belief helps attract the best and brightest talent—candidates want to work for companies staffed by satisfied employees.

Fortunately, the method for building relationships with employee and candidate believers generally follows the same process as with customers—although brands may need to make minor adjustments to their engagements (e.g., topics, tone, delivery channels). Moreover, it may be easier to identify believers, as the company has greater opportunities to gather and analyze data according to more granular segmentations (e.g., job title, department).

Activating your believers

The best method for activating your believers will be informed by the profile you've created. The believer description and associated information should indicate ideal engagement characteristics like the messaging (e.g., casual, business, legal) and the most effective channels (i.e., where believers physically or digitally spend their time and receive information).

Build an activation plan for reaching your believers accordingly and with respect to your brand's goals—be it generating awareness, launching a rebrand or another purpose. Before launching engagements and experiences, however, be sure to test the activation.

And rather than testing whether audiences approve of minor details, what's essential is evaluating whether the intended message is communicated effectively. If your audience fails to take away the intended understanding—that is, the reinforcement of what your brand means—your activation efforts will be for naught.

Tracking your believers

Knowing whether your believer activation achieved its goals (and improving future engagements) requires tracking performance. However, most traditional customer tracking methods won't provide the necessary insight for the same reason that solely analyzing customer demographics won't identify your believers.

Because psychographics deal with a deeper level of buyers' motivations and decision-making, net promoter score (NPS), customer satisfaction and comparable metrics prove insufficient.

Tracking believers instead requires tracking relationships. Surveys remain important, but believer responses carry the greatest weight. So, brands need to allow individuals to self-segment themselves via questions that help respondents indicate strong believer profile alignment. Additionally, tracking the relationship involves evaluating the connection customers develop with the brand (e.g., whether they consider it a "go-to" option). This believer tracking data should be compared against competitors to benchmark performance and monitor progression over time.

A different perspective on customer relationships

Examining customer relationships according to brand belief rather than loyalty acknowledges the greater purchasing autonomy recently expressed by customers and how it's made those relationships more fluid. Customers bear no obligations; therefore, cultivating their belief through resonant and consistent experiences that align with their psychographic motivations proves the biggest competitive advantage any brand could seize.

And, ultimately, this approach is merely a matter of making authenticity the foundation for brand-customer relationships.