

The Compass and the Nail: How the Patagonia Model of Loyalty Can Save Your Business, and Might Just Save the Planet

Craig Wilson

Rare Bird Books (Aug 11, 2015)

Hardcover \$23.95 (240pp)

978-1-942600-06-0

This high-level discussion of how to engender brand loyalty deserves to be a seminal work on the subject.

So many books written about brand loyalty address the same basic premise: that brands need to form strong emotional bonds with customers and become essential in their lives. Few books, however, reveal a detailed strategy for brands to achieve this kind of marketing nirvana. This is where Craig Wilson's excellent *The Compass and the Nail* is refreshingly different. Here, Wilson, who helped pioneer loyalty marketing for the innovative Patagonia brand, lays out his "Brand Ecosystem," a comprehensive model "by which to architect a loyal following."

Drawing on both his experience with Patagonia and subsequent brand consulting, Wilson moves from a conceptual discussion of brands and customer loyalty to the specifics of how loyalty occurs. The two primary components of the Brand Ecosystem, writes Wilson, are the "Customer Activation Cycle" and the "Story Universe," which together "define loyalty in scientific terms, making why loyalty happens measurable, predictable, observable, and repeatable." He describes these components in considerable detail, employing terms that, while familiar, take on great meaning because of the richness and resonance of Wilson's eloquent writing. He divides the Customer Activation Cycle, for example, into four increasingly intensive segments, which he calls a Progression of Resonance: Blink, Test, Bond, Love. Wilson points out that customers who reach the Love segment become Cheerleaders, individuals who "represent ten to twelve times the contribution dollars over first time buyers," who "advocate on your brand's behalf," and who "are willing to pay premiums to remain with your brand."

Wilson concludes that brand loyalty is strongest when a brand exhibits true purpose: "Customers believe their association with ethical companies is something that makes their world a little bit better, and in so doing creates satisfaction and motivates them to take action."

Given the multitude of works written about brand and customer loyalty, *The Compass and the Nail* handily breaks through by proposing a meaningful marketing methodology that practitioners should be able to apply almost step-by-step to their own situations.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (Fall 2015)

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