Four Smart Ways to Increase Telecom Customer Engagement and Strengthen Brand Loyalty

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Across the board, telecom enjoys a stickiness with consumers other industries might envy. While brand allegiance may appear alive and well, the reason customers stay with their telecom providers has less to do with loyalty than inertia. People are primarily avoiding the hassle of changing providers.

That said, individual telecoms have an opportunity to shift the narrative. By prioritizing positive retention strategies over those that may be restrictive, telecom brands can deepen engagement and build genuine loyalty — transforming from a provider people merely live with to one they can't live without.

Balancing marketing fundamentals with what's next

Some of the loyalty-building methods deployed by progressive brand and experience strategists are grounded in core marketing principles. Others are gaining traction thanks to emerging trends and technologies. Here are four approaches telecom teams might consider as they work to deepen customer relationships.

Value-added experiences

Adding features to enhance a customer's experience beyond the core services they expect is a proven way to boost engagement. Because value-adds can create market differentiation, this is an effective method for companies promoting a commoditized product or operating in a highly competitive environment.

Some examples of value-adds include hyper-personalized content, embedded finance experiences, or gamified rewards. The latter is an element deployed by Dunkin' Donuts to incentivize return visits. When the quick-service restaurant and coffee chain enhanced its traditional points-for-drinks loyalty program with a tiered rewards system (complete with animated rockets for "boosted-status" earners), Dunkin' reported a 24% year-over-year increase in sales from loyalty members.

Closer to home, mobile communication providers are exploring service-centered value-adds, such as "not spot" coverage. These satellite-enabled calls from areas with no network service are rapidly emerging as a potential differentiator in the industry.

Where to start: Data analytics is a powerful tool for identifying the value-adds most likely to induce loyalty. Insights around usage patterns, purchase behaviors, service preferences, and churn triggers can help telecoms uncover clues as to what their customers may find most appealing.

Freemium services

Offering a basic version of a product or service free — while charging for premium features — is an effective way to accelerate organic growth. The strategy may also generate word-of-mouth momentum to fuel broader adoption. A commitment-free basic version is frictionless and can inspire more people to give it a try. When the experience is positive, users can become informal ambassadors, sharing it with their communities.

A real-world example is the recent TransUnion® Announcement [PH1] about its launch of a direct-to-consumer freemium credit education solution with Credit Sesame, a consumer credit management company. The free-first access will be optimized with alerts, which are critical to boost engagement. TransUnion's internal analysis revealed 22% of consumers who received a dark web monitoring alert logged into the platform within seven days.

Where to start: Organizations exploring a freemium strategy should begin with a deep understanding of their intended users. Knowing who the targets are and what they value enables strategists to establish clear user journeys from onboarding to upgrades to long-term engagement.

Embedded hyper-personalization

Making customer interactions feel tailored rather than generic is now essential for brand loyalty. Some research has even found personalization to be valued above speed and convenience. For instance, in 2024 a TELUS International survey found more than 6 in 10 customers would opt for a personalized customer experience over a faster one. Whether it's a barista's personal message on a cup or Deep Brew's AI-driven offers, Starbucks has made hyper-personalization a hallmark of its brand experience. Organizations inside and outside the telecom industry are taking a page from Starbucks' book, weaving personalization into the customer experience.
For mobile providers, branded call display has emerged as a compelling way to show customers the network understands them as individuals. By displaying a company's name, logo, and reason for calling — right on the call screen and without a separate app — the technology adds a layer of personalization that also inspires trust. Beyond the reassurance that an incoming call is meant for them, branded call display also reduces the need for call screening, enhancing the overall experience.

Where to start: Because the most effective hyper-personalization strategy runs on real-time contextual data, performing an audit of an organization's data posture helps determine the starting point. Strategists can then uncover gaps in data sourcing and analysis, as well as data privacy and security, both of which are increasingly important components of the brand-consumer relationship. The audit can help determine which personalization use cases are possible and which may require a change to the organization's data infrastructure.

Radical accountability

Regardless of the brand, industry, product, or service — sometimes things go wrong. When an organization disappoints its customers, it deserves a rebound. Going above and beyond to own mistakes and put things right can be a powerful differentiator — one with a long-lasting impact on trust and loyalty.

One way network providers are incorporating radical accountability into their retention strategies is by providing financial reimbursement for unexpected disruptions. Some telecoms are offering bill credits for days when customers experience service outages.

This strategy reassures customers they won't pay for downtime and reinforces service reliability. As threat actors target critical infrastructure like communication networks, this timely approach signals a commitment to resilience and continuity that customers demand.

Where to start: To better ensure the authenticity of this approach, teams should first define what accountability means within their own organizations, which enables strategists to secure executive buy-in more easily. Radical accountability only works when championed from the top of the organization.

Retention strategies pull double duty, building brand equity along the way

When telecom brands focus on earning loyalty instead of enforcing it, they can build deeper customer relationships to generate new and organic growth. When engagement is driven by compounding value, personal attention, and trust, retention is a natural outcome. This approach creates the kind of stickiness all companies covet, advancing a telecom as a "can't-live-without-it" brand.

For more information, or to learn more about branded call display, visit TransUnion today. [PH1]