

## Customer Participation: The Apple Way

*Customer participation helps companies to manage the marketing effort effectively*

According to Sloan Management Review, customer participation can be very profitable. Companies have shown positive growth when emphasized customer participation over word-of-mouth, as opposed to the reverse. Customer-to-company activity creates more customer 'stickiness' than customer-to-customer activity. Customers who offer feedback have become the most loyal customers because they deliberately invested their time to help the companies. They buy from the same company too in the future.

***Managing the marketing effort*** is to implement marketing program effectively. The management must continuously monitor the marketing program and take measures to correct deviations, if any, and any other wrong steps. The success of marketing program depends upon the collaborative efforts of all the employees of the organization.

Customer participation helped the companies in two ways: confirming what the company already knows and offering new ideas. Companies should not emphasize customer participation at the cost of encouraging positive word-of-mouth. Companies should consider customer participation and word-of-mouth are two sides of the same coin to build company brand equity.

For example, Apple, takes more rigorous and organized programs to encourage customer engagement and participation. Apple is consciously committed to encourage customer participation through various platforms as follows.

- **Customer feedback web pages:** The customer feedback web pages are interface friendly, easy to locate and operate
- **Apple Support Communities website:** An online platform where customers can interact with other customers and the company to share opinion on Apple products
- **Apple's Express Lane advanced support website:** Customers can discuss and open a dialogue with Apple engineers so that company can fine-tune its responses
- **Apple Customer Pulse:** Online community of selected customers who are involved in customized surveys to elicit their views about the various subjects and issues pertaining to Apple products



Source: Google Images

Apple also gives importance to word-of-mouth along with customer participation. It monitors word-of-mouth regularly and values customer comments to restructure training programs for employees, initiate service failure recovery activities, and reward employees. Apple also measures the relationship between brand evangelists and brand equity on a continuous basis. Apple values both customer comments and feedback to understand the dynamics of customer participation and word-of-mouth on purchase behavior.

Topic	Course
Managing the marketing effort: Strategic planning process in marketing :Unit 9.6	Marketing Management

**Source:** Merlo O, Eisingerich A.B, and Auh S. (2013), *Why Customer Participation Matters*, *MITSloan Management Review*, December 19, 2013.