



BY GERI FORSAITH, LICENSED CONVEYANCER AT SYDNEY PROPERTY CONVEYANCING.

Get engaged

If more referrals, happier customers and higher sale prices sound good, you'd better become acquainted with the art of engagement.

I love my iPad. My MacBook, too. Not to mention my iPhone which sleeps beside me each night. But I wasn't always an Apple person. In fact, until just a few years ago, I was on Team PC, along with most of the world. So how did Apple conduct such a quick takeover on such a massive scale and how can their tactics work for you?

Experience is the difference

Without a doubt, part of Apple's success comes down to their excellent products and staff who are passionate about what they do. But mostly, Apple's success comes down to one word: engagement.

See, when customers come into contact with Apple — whether that's via a product they've purchased, by jumping onto their website, or even just by unwrapping that clever packaging — their experience is outstanding. It's memorable. And customers appreciate that. Customers enjoy their time interacting with Apple.

And then, a few really special things happen:

- Customers return to make repeat purchases.
- They become less concerned about price.
- They become more forgiving of any mistakes.



- And most of all, they pass on the love. Engaged customers tell friends and family how great their experience was; in turn sending more buyers into Apple's stores.

Imagine what higher levels of customer engagement could do for you.

Now imagine how damaging low levels of engagement could be. The Economic Intelligence Unit (an independent analysis and advisory organisation

in The Economist Group) in conjunction with Adobe, recently conducted a survey on engagement. Over 300 C-level executives participated and almost every single one said a lack of customer engagement resulted in lost sales.

How do you engage customers?

According to the executives in the EIU survey, there is one thing most important for creating engagement: respect for the customer.

“Clients need transparency, efficiency and trust.”

Treating them the way you'd like to be treated. For Apple, this has translated to applying consideration to every kind of interaction a customer has with them. You can bet that,

even now, Apple employees are sitting in a boardroom somewhere asking questions like: 'Could our packaging be easier to open and better for the environment?', 'Are our customer service staff informed enough to be as helpful as possible?' and 'Can we create a keyboard that won't cause RSI?' (I'm particularly excited about that last one.)

How engagement can work for you

Engagement might not mean clever packaging or

giant retail stores for your business, but the principle remains the same: it's all about consideration. Buying and selling property are generally the biggest financial decisions of peoples' lives — so clients need transparency, efficiency and trust. That means following practices like:

- Calling and emailing when you say you will.
- Providing honest valuations.
- Being punctual for appointments.

- Communicating in plain English, not 'property speak'.
- Recommending other great agents in your area.
- Being genuinely engaged in the process.

They're basic concepts, but you'd be surprised at how many people don't apply them. And once you've got those things covered, it's about going the extra mile. That could mean providing a fridge of complimentary bottled water in the office for clients or a weekly

email to update your clients on your work for them. It could mean sending a gift voucher each time a customer refers someone new or offering foot massages in reception.

Whatever you do, as in life, it's all about putting a little consideration into the needs of others. Think of it the way businessman and visionary Henry Ford did: "A business absolutely devoted to service will have only one worry about profits. They will be embarrassingly large." Amen to that. ♦

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