

# 30+ Ways Auto Brands Can Strengthen Customer Relationships

Now more than ever, brands must develop strong customer & stakeholder relationships that build trust, increase engagement & develop into brand community.

## **Customer satisfaction is at its lowest point in 20 years.**

This directly impacts your brand's ability to thrive in a competitive marketplace.

Designing experiences for community prioritizes your brand in the hearts & minds of your most important audiences, giving you increased brand loyalty, boosted brand presence & a higher customer lifetime value.

Transform your next activation with these ideas from auto brands & shows:

### **#1 Show (don't tell) your audiences what's in it for them.**

**Experientialize your business solutions.** Journalists answer the question WIIFM (What's In It For Me) to capture readers' attention. Use it to grab & keep customers' interest. Savvy brand activations at the 2023 New York International Auto Show ditched no-substance stunts, instead experientializing features like software to show (not tell) how they improve customers' daily lives. Porsche used three sensory zones & a 4D Cinema Room to create an immersive experience at the Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix. Integrate storytelling & scenarios. Use interactive screens, VR headsets or physical simulators, so customers can experience your offering's value first-hand.

### **Personalize the journey to solve customer pain points.**

Use psychographic data to build customer personas & pinpoint the elements that will move each persona to engage with your brand. Use customer testimonials to address common challenges & hesitations. Craft hands-on experiences that invite

audiences to interact with your products & services. Implement technology such as RFID on a puck table or large touchscreens where customers can choose their narratives. After the event, send customers short-form videos or snackable guides that answer their top questions or concerns. Integrate those answers into future event invites or entice them to engage with a digital forum of your brand enthusiasts.

### **#2 Position your brand as the connector for your customers & stakeholders.**

#### **Show how customers can make a difference through purpose.**

EVs took the spotlight at the New York Auto Show, but savvy brand activations invited customers to actively participate in slowing climate change. Encouraging participation gives customers more than a new car—it shows how their actions can make a difference. Beyond climate change goals, Subaru hosted pet adoption events, asking customers to open their homes to animals in need. Toyota's Sports Festival elevated Paralympians & gave audiences the opportunity to participate in competitions, regardless of their skill level. Don't stop after your event is over: Organize community drives where your customers can recycle car batteries or clear up litter. Run contests that challenge your customers to be a greener commuter for a week. Encourage involvement in local legislation that supports your cause. Guide your brand community to make a difference by showing what they can achieve by coming together.

#### **Use education & empowerment as additional customer touchpoints.**

In the New York Auto Show's EV Education Center, government entities & companies revealed available tax incentives & explained home power options. Volkswagen tested

# Turn Your Experience into a Thriving Brand Community

Savvy brand experiences invite customers to actively participate in their initiatives & causes. Doing so gives customers more than just a new car—it shows how their actions can make a difference in the world. Guide your brand community to make an impact by showing what they can achieve by coming together.

customers' knowledge & boosted engagement with trivia. The 2023 North American International Detroit Auto Show used a 300-foot acceleration test track for its eco-friendly education. Engage customers "beyond the room" of your next event with bite-size content, local meetups or answering questions from post-session surveys. Nissan's "EV School" features Formula E drivers & educated younger audiences. Kia's "EV Education 101" series shows customers how to get the most out of their vehicles. Send attendees follow-up resources demonstrating EV-related cost-savings. Gamify learning both at & after your activation with interactive quizzes, badges, rewards & certificates.

## **Help your customers find their people.**

Facilitate valuable interactions where ideas are exchanged & relationships are formed—both with your brand & with other stakeholders. Give attendees ample opportunities to discover like-minded people. In Berlin, Kia captivated e-sports fans with its "Tilt-Proof Challenge," using facial-tracking software to see if audiences were "tilted" (gamer slang for "upset") from the tilts of their ride along an intense racetrack. Detroit's Auto Show hosted an EV Jobs Academy program event, connecting potential employers & jobseekers. Create meetups for your biggest brand advocates or provide like-minded attendees digital spaces to gather with online forums & virtual brainstorming sessions. Offer opportunities for professional matchmaking. Launch contests & scavenger hunts that encourage people to interact with & discover each other.

## **#3 Use partnerships to expand your reach & deepen emotional connections.**

**Use pan-industrial partners to widen your customer base.**  
Partnerships can give you access to new customers while

adjacent branding provides creative hooks to drive emotional connection for relationship building. Hyundai celebrated Disney's 100th anniversary with an IONIQ 5 concept car featuring sparkling headlights, an interior light show, themed music & plenty of magic. At the premiere of "Avatar: The Way of Water," Mercedes-Benz used its VISION AVTR concept car to highlight "Ambition 39"—their zero-emissions initiative. Surrounding the 2022 LA Auto Show, Bridgestone partnered with the city's coffee shops to lure in customers with hot cups of java. Partner with a leisure clothing label to provide customers comfort on long road trips. Team up with outdoor gear designers for interactive challenges & obstacle courses. Highlight your need for speed with a running shoe partnership.

## **Activate social commitment through purposeful partnerships.**

Use partnerships to underline your brand's commitment to a cause. Chrysler & the Autism Society of America partnered on a stimulation-decreasing "Calm Cabin" feature for the new Pacifica minivan. Subaru joined forces with Meals on Wheels at the LA Auto Show, giving free show tickets to program volunteers. Harness partnerships that appeal to your customers' core values. Partner with a local nursery to plant a tree for every EV sold. Commit to inclusion efforts with more a more diverse sales staff. Reach out to food banks to organize donation drives.

Use these ideas to develop tangible relationships with your customers & stakeholders, so you can pull them into your brand's orbit & transform these relationships into active brand communities that give your brand year-round dividends.

**Ready for a brand experience that bonds brand & customer?**

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