



Outdoor & Adventure Brand Advocacy Guide

How to build stellar brand ambassador programs
for the Outdoor & Adventure industry

Brand Advocacy in the Outdoor & Adventure Industry

Outdoor brands have some of the highest potential to reap the rewards of Brand Advocacy because of the strong identities they appeal to. People who love outdoor brands are tied together by very specific experiences and environments. And because of this, they also share many similar values that brands can align with.

In this guide, we will explore the opportunity presented to outdoor brands in Brand Advocacy, and go through a few actionable steps to improve it including brand storytelling, and Brand Advocacy Programs for customers, professionals and brand ambassadors.



Outdoor Brands Have Massive Advocacy Opportunities

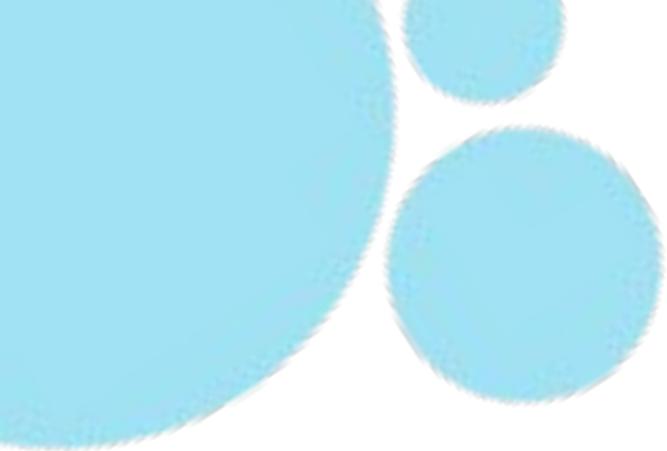


For the outdoor brands who get this right, an amazing community of passionate customers awaits. These are people that will constantly express their love for the brand to their friends and family. They will show up to all the community events, leave stellar reviews, repurchase products and defend a brand from criticism when it arises.

This cultivated community won't stop there, they'll be able to give honest feedback on the brand and the product, and they'll put in effort into driving more revenue and bringing more members into the community. So why isn't every brand trying this?



*Brand Advocacy is not
easy, nor should it be*



Many brands have struggled to structure their efforts. Others do not know how to begin, but the fortunate truth is that Brand Advocacy is not an artform hidden in the mist—it has a methodology that can be adopted by any outdoor brand willing to put in the effort.

Where many outdoor brands fail is by assuming that Brand Advocacy is a quick-fix to short-term marketing problems. Brand advocacy is about cultivating relationships, and that takes time and effort.



The Single Most Important Element of Advocacy

Value

Action

Environmental Stewardship



Producing sustainable products

Ethical Work Environment



Achieving B Corp Certification

Challenge & Accomplishment



Hosting competitive events

Customer Appreciation



Spotlighting customer stories

Matching a brand's purpose to the values of consumers is the foundation for successful advocacy—especially when appealing to passion-driven outdoor consumers.

Typically, this manifests in the form of environmental stewardship, but it can also encompass other ideals such as personal perseverance or embracing teamwork.

The key to great outdoor Brand Advocacy is to first express clear values and purpose, then show commitment to those values through tangible actions (like the ones listed).



Authentic expression and actions are crucial because outdoor advocates have a higher standard of expectation from their brands. Advocates and customers in the outdoor sector are enthusiasts that are passionate about their chosen activities as well as the environment. As a result, they are more aware of a brand's impact on the planet, and can catch inauthenticity and greenwashing more easily.

When it comes to capturing the attention and love of outdoor advocates, brands must show, not tell.

Understanding the Outdoor Advocate

Beyond higher expectations from their brands, there are some specific details that outdoor brands should understand about their customers and potential advocates.

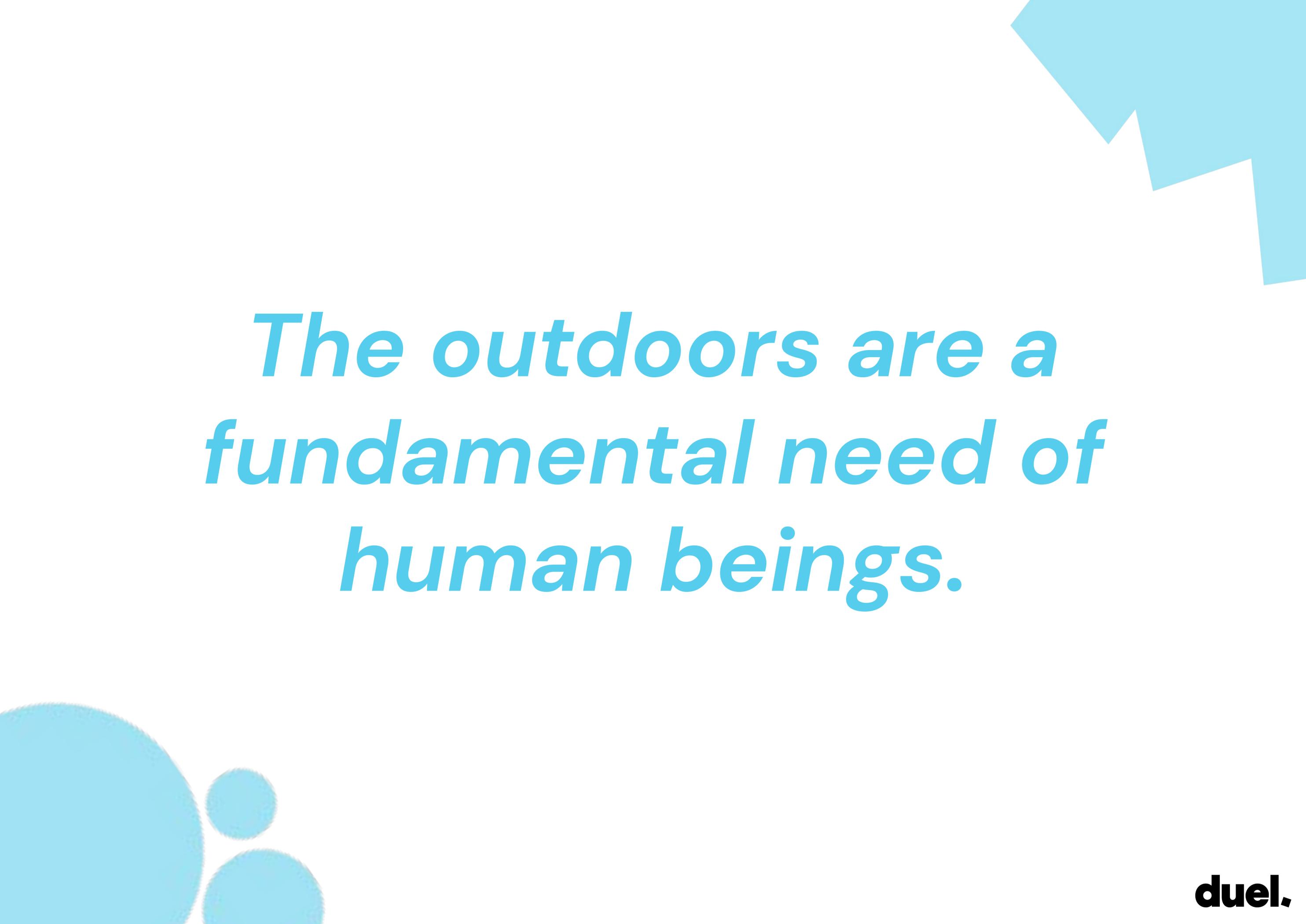
Relationship with Nature

While it may seem obvious that outdoor advocates hold a special bond with nature, there is more to be understood about what that truly means.

Outdoor consumers appreciate nature, but for many different reasons—and they express this appreciation through different activities as well. This is the nuance that is crucial for outdoor brands to understand—matching the psychological motivation of a particular subset of consumers.

Research has shown that people engage with nature for a number of reasons.

There is plenty of overlap between these drives, but it is important for brands to understand how to specifically appeal to each type of drive and the emotions as well as behaviour that come along with it.



*The outdoors are a
fundamental need of
human beings.*

1. The desire for change and escape

Many consumers use outdoor activities as an avenue for change and escape from the daily struggles of modern life. Nature represents many things that people do not have day-to-day: a peaceful organic environment, a sense of new adventures and an exciting form of uncertainty.



2. The pursuit of challenge and activity

Many advocates seek the outdoors to pursue a particular challenge, such as a hike or competitive sport. For these advocates, it's crucial to appeal to them at every stage of their process in the challenge:

Planning
and preparation

a person prepares their bag for their hike and downloads an offline version of the map.

Overcoming
the challenge

a person goes hiking, trekking through forests as they ascend to a nearby mountain top.

Reaping
the rewards

a beautiful view and a moment to rest and relax, taking a photo of the view as a memory.

Brands should always try to appeal to advocates at each of these stages. For example, for hikers preparing to go on an adventure, brands can encourage them to share photos of what they carry in their bag. Brands can also provide fun social challenges, product giveaways or events that support them through these stages as well.



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3. The desire for community and identity

Many outdoor enthusiasts are driven by the social nature of their activity. Nature simply acts as a healthy backdrop for this to take place. Team sports, group hikes and camping trips are just a few examples of how consumers and enthusiasts leverage a love for nature to create stronger community ties. This desire for bonding represents an opportunity for brands to help—which often comes in the form of providing lessons or hosting events that bring people together for a shared activity.

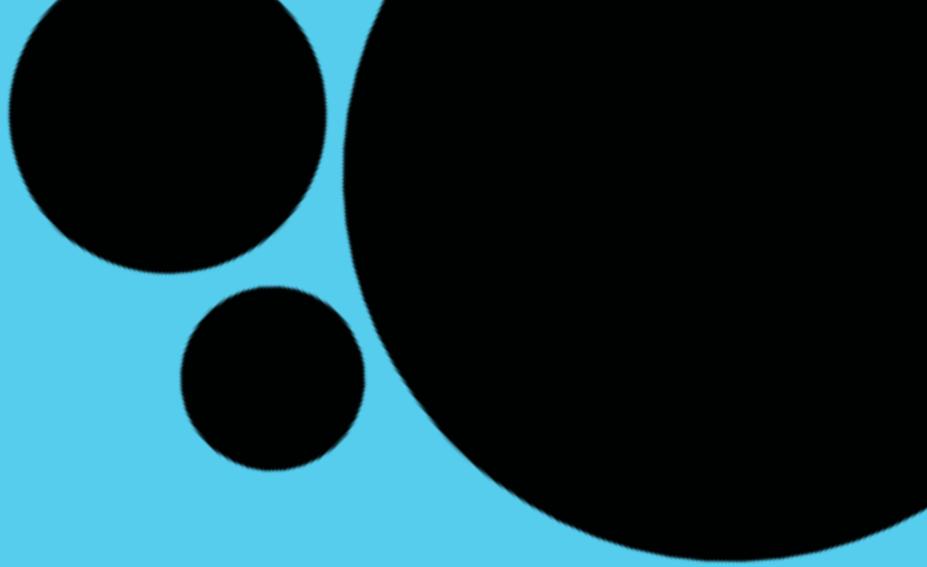


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4. Environmental advocacy and protection



Potential advocates for outdoor brands will typically favour environmentalism and sustainability, and they will have extremely high standards for brands when it comes to supporting these values. The bar has already been set high with brands like The North Face and Patagonia, and advocates now have a keen sense of what is true environmentalism and what is pandering.



Putting It All Into An Advocacy Program

How can an advocacy program help to create new advocates? And how can it maintain strong relationships with the current ones? Advocacy programs typically take the form of a task-reward system that gives customers a sense of progression in their relationship with a brand.

More commitment to completing tasks means a deeper relationship – so a crucial component for brands to consider is what type of behaviour is desired from their advocates and how to encourage this behaviour through tasks and rewards.

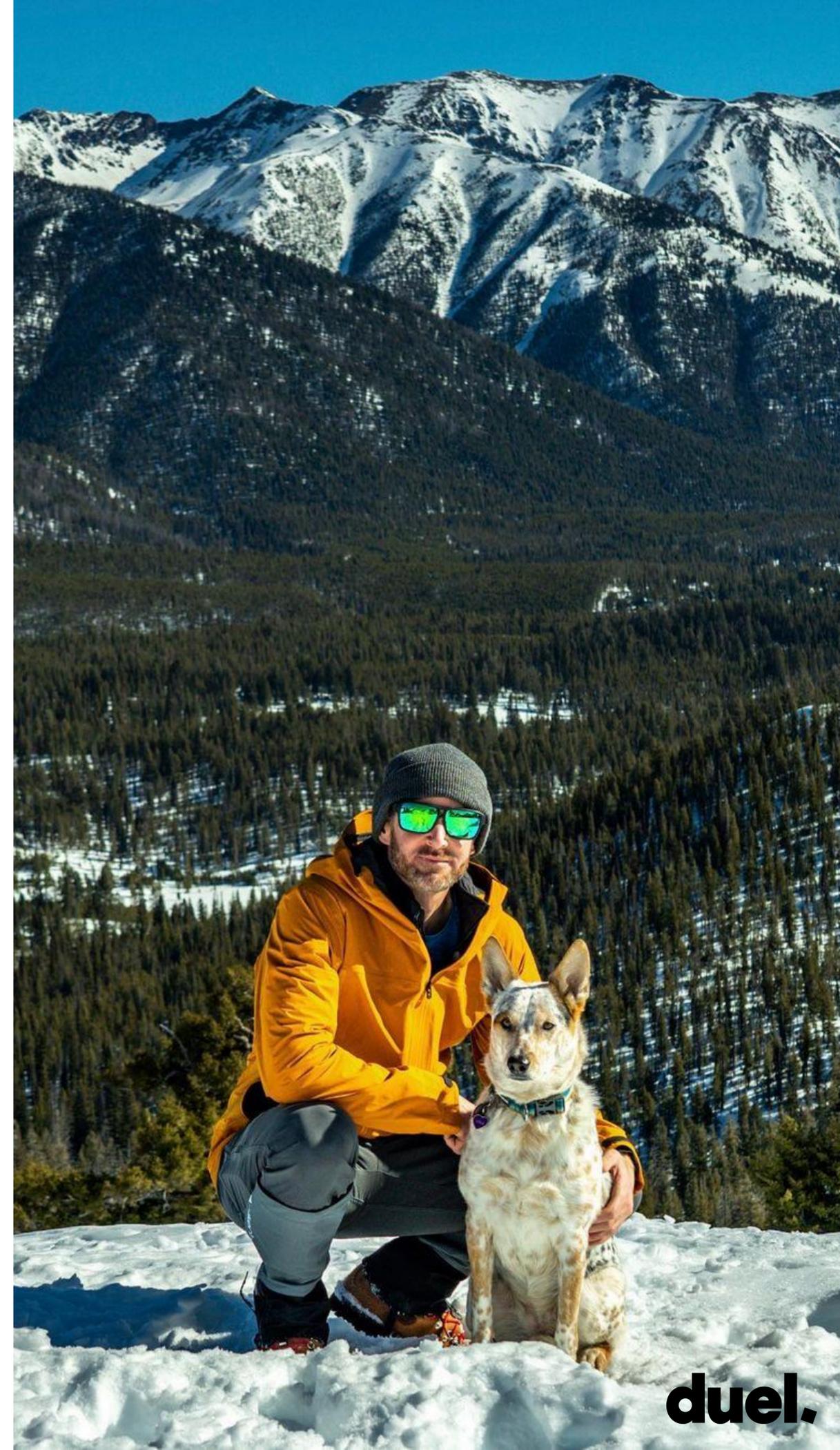
The specific value of an advocacy program varies from individual to individual. But it is recommended to appeal to common needs and challenges of outdoor enthusiasts:

- Express the brands alignment with environmental values
- Encourage more outdoor behaviour (especially within the specific activity)
- Reduce the large barriers to connecting with nature (create communities, etc.)
- Create a platform for community expression & individual expression
- For the challengers, help them through each component of the journey

The Power of Ambassador and Pro Programs

Of all the types of advocacy programs, ambassador and professional programs are especially popular amongst outdoor brands, and for good reason. Outdoor brands are well situated to creating and nurturing effective ambassadors. These brands are often linked to passion, skill and challenge—which should be reflected within their programs.

Customers have a clear vision of what they want to achieve, and they have concrete examples of skill and passion that they can turn to as role-models. These role-models become ambassadors, touting both their prowess in a specific outdoor activity as well as an enthusiasm for the shared values of community and outdoorsmanship. They are admirable for their skill and relatable for their beliefs.



How to Build a Stellar Ambassador/Pro Program

Ambassador programs and pro programs are often intimidating to start, but thankfully there is a methodology that brings structure to the process.

Brand Advocacy Consultant Jaclyn Crocker uses this clear methodology to help bring ambassador programs to life.

1. Define the Program Purpose



What is the purpose of this program?
How does it support the overall vision for the brand? These high level ideas are important to establish because they will define the approach and tone of the entire program.



2. Decide Who Are Members of the Program



Selecting ambassadors is a nuanced task that should be considered thoughtfully. Athletes, employees, certified professionals and community leaders are just a few examples of potential groups of ambassadors. Each of these groups will bring different perspectives, motivations and abilities to the table. For outdoor brands that want to recruit multiple groups of ambassadors, it is good to have a framework and strategy for each.

3. Build an Ambassador Framework

An ambassador framework outlines the relationship between a brand and an ambassador. These frameworks can range from informal relationships to formal employee contracts. A good framework should outline what is expected from the ambassadors as well as the brand, and what each group gets in exchange for their commitment to the relationship ([here is a great example](#)).

It should also note the length of the relationship and ideally outline specific goals such as how much content needs to be produced or how many events need to be attended. It helps to be as specific as possible with these frameworks. More details allow for more clarity and more scalability should a brand want to ramp up their recruitment into the program.

4. Define Clear Objectives

Objectives are desired outcomes that are less tangible and more qualitative, often relating back to the program's purpose. While they don't need numbers to be attached, it is good to think about and outline what success looks like, and compare the program's performance regularly against that image.



5. Define Clear Key Results

Key results are specific, measurable outcomes that relate to the program's objectives and purpose. It should be concrete and clear when these results are met or not met. They should also have a timeframe attached.

Common Key Results

Social
Channel
Engagement

of Referrals

Ambassador-
Driven
Revenue

of
Ambassadors
Recruited

of Events
Hosted

of UGC
Produced

6. Conduct Recruitment & Onboarding

The onboarding experience can make or break an ambassador program and should be taken seriously. A great onboarding experience establishes a great first impression and primes ambassadors to bring their enthusiasm and drive to the brand.

Brands should make an ambassador feel welcome and connected at all times.

7. Set a Clear Communication Cadence

Establish how communication will work with brand ambassadors. Ambassadors should have a clear idea of how often the brand will communicate with them and through which channels. Of course, issues and questions may arise that do not match the cadence, and so ambassadors should also have a clear channel to receive support internally.

8. Gather and Implement Feedback



Create a process to gather and implement feedback from ambassadors. For smaller brands and programs, this can be a simple document. For larger programs, these might be organised surveys that are regularly sent to ambassadors, or an event designed to gather insights.

9. Compare Against Your Vision of Success

Even with so much diversity amongst ambassador programs, there are fundamental signs that show an ambassador program is successful:

- Engaged, happy ambassador
- Clear program guidelines
- Ambassador-produced content is produced regularly and shows high engagement
- Customers and community are giving positive feedback about ambassadors





Outdoor brands already have a clear grasp on the idea that advocates will be passionate about the outdoors and the environment. The true test of an ambassador program comes in proving their commitment to a group with high standards of scrutiny, and also appealing to their specific connection to nature.

Key Learnings

- Purpose and values are the most important focus for outdoor brands
- Nature is a fundamental need of human beings
- Outdoor enthusiasts have a very specific relationships with nature and their activities
- An established framework is required to create impactful ambassador and pro programs
- Build programs to be adaptive to feedback from ambassadors

**Scale your brand with
an Ambassador Program today**

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