

*shopify*plus

# POWER UP PLUS:

6 TECHNOLOGIES TO ENHANCE YOUR  
SHOPIFY PLUS STORE

CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS:

nosto

ORACLE  
Bronto



smile.io

KLEVVU

Brightpearl

# 04

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**REWARDS AND COMMUNITY: HOW  
REWARDS PROGRAMS HELP BOOST  
BRAND ADVOCACY**

# 04

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Your customers' emotions have the biggest impact on their purchase decisions. Nothing pushes them to "buy now" like how your product or brand makes them feel. Knowing this, it's important for your brand to foster the emotions that have the power to turn a prospective customer into a repeat purchaser, but how do you do that?

**The answer is with a rewards program. By the end of this chapter, you'll know:**

- » How rewards help you build more brand advocates
- » The three steps for building a community, and
- » The five strategies you can start today to jumpstart your brand's sustainable growth.

# REWARDS ALLOW YOU TO BUILD A BRAND COMMUNITY OF ADVOCATES

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Building a rewards program for your customers is by far the best way to encourage emotional relationships between your brand and your best customers. Through points, VIP tiers, and customer referrals, you introduce ways to engage that create a dynamic brand experience.

By delighting customers with rewards in exchange for making purchases and performing other valuable actions, you create strong feelings of joy, belonging, and trust that motivate customers to join your program, continue engaging, and share it with others.



These three stages — join, engage, and share — are the backbone of a strong brand community that connects your new and existing customers. By rewarding customers for participating in each of these phases, you're able to cultivate a group of brand advocates that shares your brand with others and stays engaged over time.

# HOW TO BUILD A BRAND COMMUNITY WITH REWARDS

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Whether you're starting a new community or strengthening an existing one, rewards will help you unlock the full potential of your best brand advocates. Here are 5 effective ways to leverage rewards to build your community.

## Make Customers Feel Like They Belong

Every single one of your customers want to feel like they're a part of something bigger than themselves. That's why a strong sense of belonging is listed as the third priority in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. As a result, your customers are looking to engage with brands that share their values and goals.

Points and VIP programs can easily fulfill this need by offering members social status they can't experience outside of your brand community. With exclusive benefits like experiential rewards and gifts that increase the farther they progress in your program, VIP programs can easily encourage customers to join your program and continue engaging over time.

You can also foster this sense of shared community by aligning your points and VIP programs with a charitable cause or shared value.



### POWER UP TIP:

**60% of customers are looking to engage with brands that have a clear sense of purpose, which means a shared cause is the perfect addition to your community's marketing efforts!**

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# WishingWELL

## REWARDS

MudLOVE is a fantastic example of this at play. Since the brand started, MudLOVE has been committed to working with a charitable organization that provides clean water to rural communities in Africa. By donating a portion of all sales to this charity, MudLOVE has publicly committed to supporting this cause, making it easy for customers who share the same beliefs to feel accepted in their brand community. This type of story is one customers want to be a part of, and will actively seek opportunities to get involved.

## Wishing Them Well

Whenever you shop MudLOVE, you're making an impact across the world. We named this program *Wishing Well Rewards* for several reasons, the most important of which refers to the water wells drilled and maintained by our nonprofit partner, [Water for Good](#).

Earning rewards is fun, and it's a direct result of your generosity. Every product you purchase (AND each free product you earn) provides 1 week of clean water to someone in the Central African Republic. As we build this new program, we'll be offering new ways for you to give even more water using your Clay Coins. Stay tuned!



## Provide Additional Value by Exceeding Expectations

If you want to attract customers to your community, you need to understand what they need from your brand. Research shows that **76% of shoppers expect brands to understand their needs and expectations**, making **value-add marketing** one of the best tools for building your brand community. With value-add marketing, you focus on exceeding your customers' expectations by delivering more than they asked for with every interaction.

While this can take many forms, rewards are by far the most effective because they're always more than your members expected. With elements like progress bars, VIP tiers, and unlocked achievements, reward programs take your brand experience to the next level in order to deliver an exceptional experience with every interaction.



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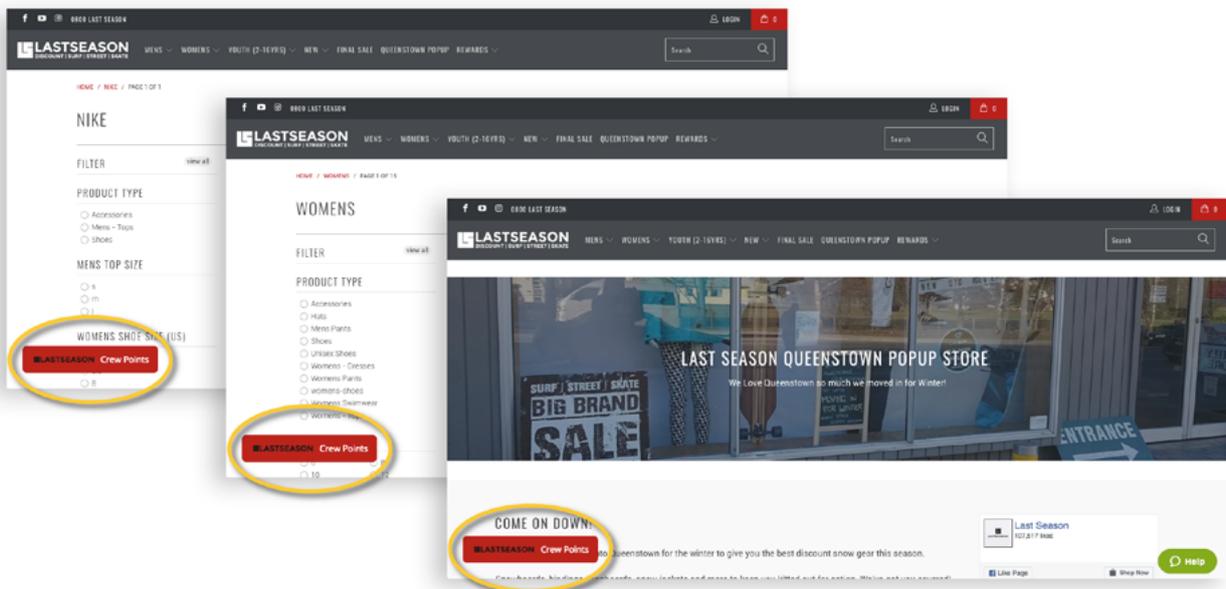
You can see this at work on Baby Tula's website. From the moment you arrive, their Collector Club rewards program is a central focus of their online experience, setting the stage for the type of experience you can expect as a member of their community. They don't stop there, though. While their rewards program is the hub of their value-add strategy, Baby Tula has also gone above and beyond in a number of other ways. From washing instructions to blog articles and video tutorials, Baby Tula has created a wide range of content that perfectly complements their rewards program, treating every VIP member to a fully cohesive brand community experience.



## Make Value Easy-to-See and Understand

When customers know they can get additional value from your brand, they'll be more likely to join your community. This idea of “visible value” creates positive feelings in your customers that get them excited to join your brand community, and rewards are the key to communicating this idea.

With rewards, you can easily establish a sense of immediate gratification that endears members to your brand. Since rewards are a familiar concept to your customers, making your program easy-to-find and even easier to understand ensures they'll want to join and engage with your community long term.



Making your program launcher and customer panel visible on your site is the easiest way to communicate your program's value to every customer who interacts with your store. No matter where you are on Last Season's site, you can discover and explore their Crew Points program in order to learn how to join, how it works, and how to earn rewards — all in less than a minute.

Last Season has also included a mockup of what their program looks like on mobile on their dedicated program page. This makes it easy for mobile shoppers to see how the program would work on any of their devices. Paying attention to these details lowers the barrier to entry and increases the chances of customers getting excited and ultimately engaging with the program.



## Give Customers Opportunities for Ongoing Engagement

When a customer's engaged in your brand community, they're always looking for more opportunities to get involved with your brand.

Rewards are the perfect gateway to more opportunities to engage because they give your members more reasons to perform a variety of valuable actions. While purchases are the most obvious, customers can also deepen their relationship with your community by leaving product reviews, sharing on social media, or simply creating an account.

With their Strong Squad VIP program, Mark Bell Slingshot was able to highlight a number of these incredible engagement opportunities. On both the program explainer page and in the customer panel, community members can easily see all of the ways they can get involved.

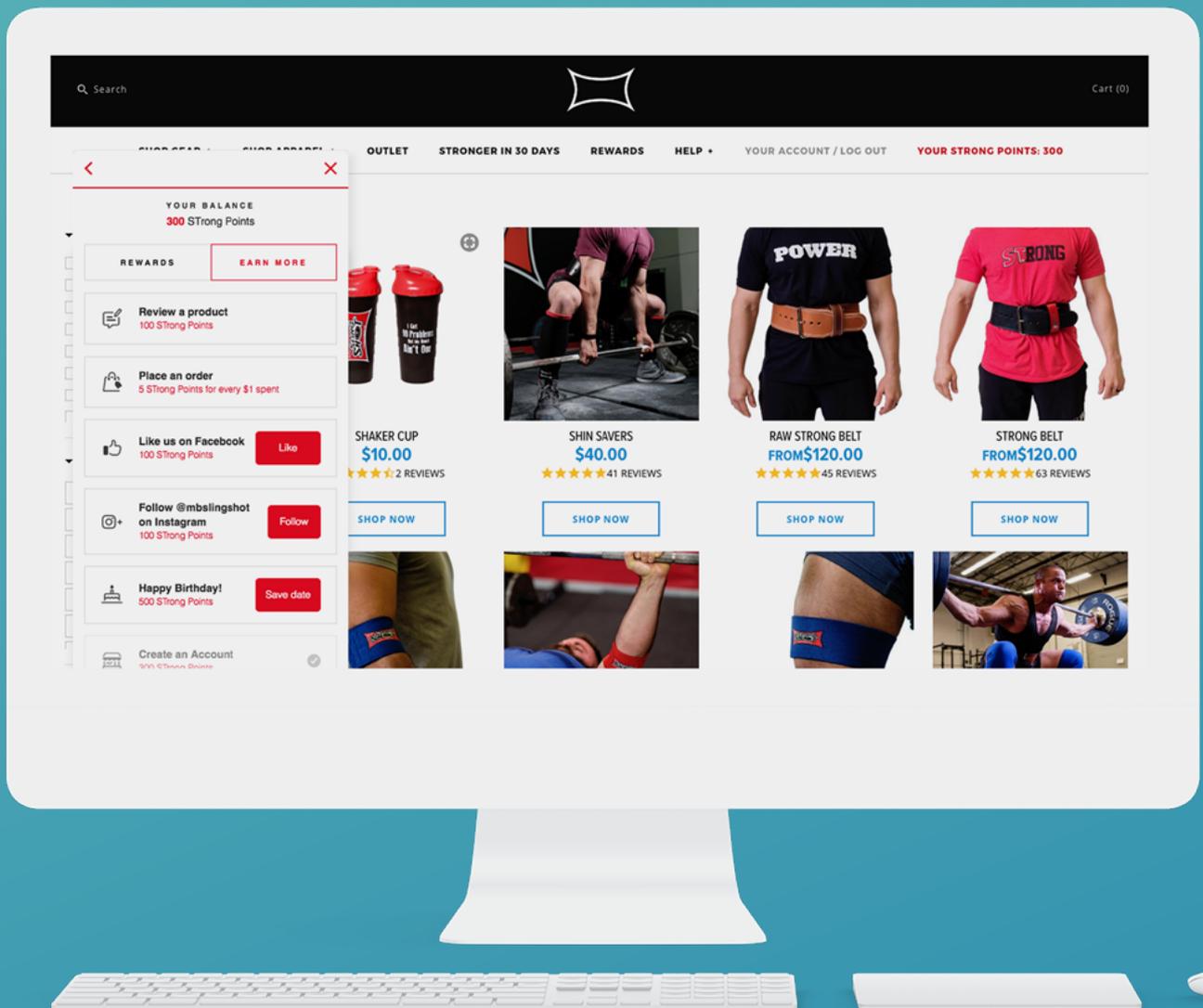
With the promise of additional rewards and a clear list of other ways to earn points directly in panel, Mark Bell's community can easily make the connections between different brand actions and the value being offered. This guarantees long-lasting customer engagement without detracting from the overall community experience.



### POWER UP TIP:

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## Incentivize Peer-to-Peer Referrals

Word-of-mouth marketing is the most effective way to grow a community because **nothing is more trusted than a referral from a friend**. In fact, **82% of customers** will proactively seek referrals from others before making a purchase. As a result, giving your existing customers a reason to share puts an extremely powerful community building tool in your hands.

This cycle brings together the join, engage, and share phases of a community-building cycle by strengthening the relationships between new and existing customers and your brand, making it valuable for every member at every stage.

**REFERRALS**

Share with your friends and you both earn rewards

**THEY GET**  
\$35 off discount

**YOU GET**  
\$50 off discount

### how it works

- You choose** what you love from a la carte, meal packs, weight loss or juice cleanse
- We deliver** fully prepared, chef-created, hand-crafted meals arrive on your doorstep, in eco-friendly packaging
- Delicious is served** after a busy day, just heat up, dig in and love

[LEARN MORE](#)

You can see this at work with Veestro's referral program. The vegetarian meal prep service offers their existing customers a generous \$50 discount for referring a new member while also offering an attractive \$35 reward for the referee. This value is both super high and incredibly easy to understand, making it an effective way to leverage their existing customers' desires to share their positive brand experience with friends.

In these ways, a referral program plays on the other ways rewards build emotional relationships and tie the whole cycle together. By closing this loop, you create a sustainable model for growth that binds existing customers together and draws new ones in, welcoming anyone and everyone to the fold.



### POWER UP TIP:

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# FINAL THOUGHTS

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When you focus on building a brand community with rewards, you open the door to sustainable growth that will remove your brand's dependency on ads. By highlighting a strong sense of belonging, creating value-add content, making your program visible, and including numerous opportunities for engagement, you can harness the power of points, VIP, and referrals to take your brand experience to the next level.

With these tools under your belt, you are perfectly positioned to build lasting emotional relationships with your customers that keep your community (and brand) thriving for years to come.



## **THIS CHAPTER WAS WRITTEN BY SMILE.IO**

At Smile, we believe the future of commerce is rooted in emotional relationships and want to help every business build a strong brand community that promotes sustainable growth.

Using a world-class rewards platform, we work with merchants to build effective points, VIP, and referral programs that invite customers to join, engage with, and share these communities with others worldwide. We're committed to making every merchant and their customers smile :)

**For more information visit [www.smile.io](http://www.smile.io)**