



BRAND SPOTLIGHT

Fanatics



From Game Day to Every Day: How Fanatics Is Redefining the Fan Experience

Inside Fanatics' playbook for turning passion into purpose and Fans into lifelong ambassadors.

by Execs In The Know



Maureen Barnett

Vice President of Global Fan Experience



At Fanatics, sports fandom isn't just a pastime; it's an identity. From the elation of a buzzer-beater to the heartbreak of a missed field goal, every win, loss, and milestone carries meaning. Maureen Barnett, Vice President of Global Fan Experience at Fanatics, has built her career around understanding the emotional pulse and translating that into a customer experience that feels as personal as the game itself.

In this exclusive Brand Spotlight, Maureen opens up about the company's journey to transform service centers into "experience hubs," empower frontline teams as brand ambassadors, and use AI not to replace human connection, but to deepen it. Her philosophy is simple yet powerful: When you lead with passion, purpose follows, and loyalty takes care of itself.

In a world of endless transactions, Fanatics proves that connection still wins championships. Under Maureen's leadership, the brand continues to blur the line between customer and community, turning passion into purpose and Fans into family.

For CX leaders everywhere, her message is a reminder that no matter how fast technology evolves, the heart of experience remains timeless: listen deeply, care genuinely, and always lead with the Fan first.

Execs In The Know (EITK): Your keynote at the Customer Response Summit (CRS) San Diego focused on the emotional connections that sports create. How do you translate that same sense of passion and loyalty into the way Fanatics designs its customer experience?

Maureen Barnett: At Fanatics, we live and breathe Fan passion. It's not something we build into our strategy; it *is* our strategy. Every package we ship carries a story: a championship remembered, a family moment celebrated, a legacy passed down. Our teams know that they're not just sending packages; they're delivering moments that matter and helping to create memories that last a lifetime.



We talk about our Fans constantly. We share their stories, sometimes the funny ones, sometimes the heartbreaking ones, because that's what keeps our work grounded in purpose. When a Fan shares that their late father's team jacket arrived in time for the memorial game, or that their child's first jersey made it to the mailbox before the big win, it connects our employees to something much bigger than ecommerce. It builds an emotional connection between our employees and our Fans.

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EITK: You've spoken about transforming service centers into "experience hubs." What does that look like in practice, and what can other brands learn from your approach?

Maureen: It starts with listening. Fan feedback is our North Star. It tells us what's working, what's not, and where we need to pivot. We don't just review survey data; we dig into the why behind it. That insight drives everything from process improvements to tool enhancements to the tone of our messaging.

One of the biggest shifts we made was reimagining the roles of our team members. They're no longer "agents," they're *ambassadors* of the Fan experience. Their job isn't just to answer questions or close a ticket; it's to make sure our Fans feel seen, heard, and valued.

Every week, we gather as a team to review Fan feedback and performance measures. We celebrate wins, identify new opportunities, and make quick adjustments. It's a living, breathing process, and it keeps us aligned to what matters most: our Fans.

EITK: Fanatics has redefined customer service agents as true brand ambassadors. What changes culturally, operationally, or technologically did that require?

Maureen: Culturally, it meant embracing a mindset of *Fans First* in everything we do. We empower our teams to act with empathy and creativity, not scripts. If a Fan is heartbroken about a delayed delivery before the Super Bowl, our teams step in, solve the problem, and make it right.

Operationally, we built systems that support that empowerment. Our teams meet Fans where they are (voice, chat, SMS, email) because flexibility is a form of respect. Technologically, we've layered in AI-powered tools that handle simple tasks quickly, freeing our ambassadors to focus on conversations that require a human touch. That combination of culture, operations, and technology allows us to show up consistently, at scale, with empathy intact.



EITK: Technology and automation are essential to modern CX, but so is human warmth. How do you strike a balance between efficiency and personal connection?

Maureen: The balance is found in listening to what really matters to Fans. Sometimes it's speed; other times it's understanding. We've learned that while technology can make transactions faster, humans make them meaningful.

We hear passion in every conversation (joy, frustration, pride, nostalgia) and that tells us something powerful: people don't come to Fanatics just to buy merchandise; they come to *feel part of something bigger*.

That realization reshaped our approach entirely. We use AI to remove friction and empower employees, but the heart of our operation remains human. We understand our Fans' emotions and their feedback to us is invaluable as we continue to chase perfection for Fans.

EITK: Sports are defined by moments. How does Fanatics capture and reflect those moments in ways that create lifelong memories?

Maureen: We see every interaction as a chance to connect, not just transact. Our team celebrates right alongside our Fans. We cheer with them after the win, we commiserate after the loss, and we're always ready with a solution when something doesn't go as planned.

Our gear often marks major life moments: the jersey a father buys for his daughter's first game, or the championship cap worn to a family reunion. We treat those purchases with the same reverence that Fans bring to their teams. That shared emotion creates a relationship that lasts long after checkout.

Automation should amplify humanity, not erase it.

EITK: You've led in multiple industries. What lessons from those experiences have shaped your approach to CX at Fanatics?

Maureen: Across every industry I've worked in, one truth holds: customers have choices, and the experience you deliver determines how they feel about your brand and whether they advocate for it.

Whether you're in retail, tech, or sports, people want to feel valued. The best CX isn't complicated; it's consistent, human, and rooted in genuine care. The details may change by industry, but the principle doesn't: *if customers know that you care, it builds lifelong relationships and trust in your brand.*



We see our fans' emotions not as noise to filter out, but as data worth honoring.



EITK: Fanatics operates on a massive global scale. What challenges and opportunities come with ensuring a consistent Fan experience across markets?

Maureen: The pace of sports is fast. Seasons change, teams evolve, and Fan expectations continue to rise. Our challenge is staying agile without sacrificing consistency. We have to anticipate what Fans want before they even know they want it, whether it's the latest player jersey, a limited-edition drop, or support in a new channel across multiple time zones.

What keeps us aligned is our foundation: five core values that guide every Fan interaction. No matter where our employees are in the world, those values ensure every Fan feels the same level of care and enthusiasm. That's how we deliver a truly *global* experience that still feels personal.

EITK: AI is reshaping customer experience across industries. How is it enhancing the Fan experience at Fanatics, and where should brands be cautious?

Maureen: AI has become one of our strongest allies. It helps us move faster, personalize at scale, and understand fans on a deeper level. From predicting needs to surfacing insights that make interactions smoother, it's a game-changer.

But we're careful not to let AI replace the human connection that defines our brand. The magic of CX happens in the spaces where emotion lives, connecting people. My advice to other leaders: let AI do the heavy lifting and let humans connect with the soul of your customer experience.



Fan passion is in our DNA. We cheer with them after the win, we commiserate after the loss, and we're always ready to make it right.

EITK: What's been one of your most memorable customer experiences, and how has it shaped your perspective?

Maureen: I think everyone in CX has that one "never again" moment, a poor experience that shaped how we lead today. For me, it reinforced how critical it is to set clear expectations and hire the right people for the right roles.

At Fanatics, the stories that stand out most are the emotional ones. The Fan who cried tears of joy when a signed jersey arrived, or the one who shared their heartbreak after a loss. These moments remind us why we do what we do.

Every laugh, every tear, every "thank you" is a reflection of the connection we've built. Being part of those experiences and leading a team that helps create them is the greatest privilege of my career.



Execs In The Know

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Thank you to Maureen Barnett and the Fanatics team for contributing to this Execs In The Know Brand Spotlight.

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