

# Is Your Organization Iconic?

Multifamily ISPs can achieve iconic status by building a culture to outpace competitors with consistent service quality and innovative products customers can't live without.

By Bryan J. Rader / Pavlov Media

At the **BROADBAND COMMUNITIES** Summit in May, I participated in a panel on “customer service.” The broad discussion covered many service areas and the variables that drive meaningful customer satisfaction for multifamily owners, managers and end users.

During the discussion, I mentioned a book by Scott McKain titled “Iconic.” The premise is “how organizations can attain, sustain, and regain the ultimate level of distinction.” In other words, become “iconic.”

My question was this: Can multifamily ISPs ever really become iconic customer service organizations? Very few companies achieve this status in *any* industry, and even fewer can sustain it.

McKain shares several examples of iconic service companies: an upscale steakhouse in Indianapolis, resort in Scottsdale and, of course, Apple for “making insanely great products that exceed promises to their customers and enrich people’s lives.” He categorizes companies into one of four service levels, with *iconic* at the top of the pyramid.

Can any of us in the broadband industry become iconic too?

## STANDING OUT

The first level McKain defines is “sameness.” At this level, there is no apparent difference between service providers – a provider might win on price but not on service. He calls this low loyalty and not sustainable.

In the broadband industry, there is much sameness. Some companies tout broadband as a commodity, like running water. I think this is a generic, bland, flat approach to service. It’s one reason many ISPs fall out of favor.

The second level is “differentiation.” Here, service providers differentiate themselves from the competition. Many managed Wi-Fi operators land in this category. Their networks differentiate because always-on, propertywide coverage is unique from other ISP options. *Reliable* and *accessible* make this a differentiating service. McKain says that “how you do what you do” lifts a company above sameness. Property owners appreciate this differentiation. But is this iconic?

The third level is “distinction.” At this elevated level, a company attracts customers because it offers an extraordinary advantage others don’t provide. Think about when Amazon launched its same-day delivery service. That separated the web retailer from every other alternative at the time.

I tried to make the argument during the Summit panel that becoming distinctive should never revolve around the “price and speed” equation. In other words, increasing a resident’s speed from 500 Mbps to 1 Gbps while raising the price by only a few percentage points is not a distinctive way to build a “customer service” culture. Companies that play this game are more likely to be *extinct* than *distinct*.

When I ask property owners and developers what “being distinct” means, they point to an environment of trust, transparency, responsiveness, visibility and focus on their projects. These attributes help ease their pain points – allowing them to be ahead of schedule, build relationships with the on-site staff, successfully onboard residents, and proactively respond if a service interruption occurs.

Yes, doing all these things will make you distinctive. A few providers have been able to do that for an extended period.

## ACHIEVING ICONIC STATUS

This leads us to the final spot in the pyramid: level 4. At this level, organizations truly achieve iconic status. To reach this status, a company must become a universal symbol of distinction, with innovative products irresistible to customers. This can be achieved only when an ISP builds an entire culture around service quality, consistently outshines its peers, and meets all the attributes above across its organization – trust, responsiveness, etc.

At Pavlov, we firmly believe our goal should be to strive for the “iconic” level across our entire organization. We take big and small steps every day toward this achievement. One day, we hope to get there.

I’m sure others in our business are striving for the same thing. Iconic status is genuinely distinctive. 🍀



*Bryan Rader is the president of MDU for Pavlov Media. His monthly column won an American Society of Business Press Editors (ASBPE) Central Regional Azbee Award.*