



“Not We” —Your Target Audience

Recognizing and Fighting Your Superfan Impulse

Park Rangers Are Superfans

Imagine spending a lifetime trying to become something. Imagine dreaming about it at night. Imagine drawing yourself in crayon wearing the clothes, the hat, standing in the real place.

You probably don't need to imagine. If you work in a national park, you're likely a superfan. Some are fans of the idea of the National Park Service in general. It doesn't matter which park you work at this season; you work in a park. Others are fans of specific parks or stories. We love dendrology or industrial history, innovation or scientific exploration.

The thing about superfans—whether they're fans of a sci-fi TV series, a specific topic, or a government agency—is they *already* care deeply about something. There's no need to convince them.



Who are the Not We?

In online fandom, there are tons of special terms used to talk about the things we love. In the *Doctor Who* community, there's a particularly useful concept: the “not we.”

The fans have realized love of a long running British sci-fi TV series is not universal. Superfans can rattle off all of the species of alien The Doctor has ever interacted with. But that's a special depth of love.

When a new episode premieres, online forums light up with discussion. But the most important thread is usually titled, “What did the ‘Not We’ think of it?”

The community knows that the survival of the thing they love depends on broad appeal. The reaction of the “Not We” to a new episode—whether non-superfans love it—is far more important to overall success than pleasing the fans. The same is true of our parks too. Preaching to the already converted doesn't help us expand our parks' reach or bring in new voices. The people who don't care as deeply as we do are far more important than those who already care deeply.

Breaking Your Fan Brain

If thinking like a casual visitor—not a superfan—is the most important step to growing our audience, how can a fan do it? One simple way is to immerse yourself in something you're not a superfan of and see how you react!

Do you know every President's name, age, and favorite breakfast cereal? Try jumping into a natural space and see what bores.

Can you name every type of rock from the planet's surface to its creamy center? Maybe it's time to visit a historic house and see when your eyes glaze over.

Simply See What They Want

We are surrounded by the “Not We” all the time too. The majority of visitors to our parks are not superfans. They care enough to come, but they aren't devoted acolytes.

Pay attention to what interests the “Not We.” What is it that's interesting to the people who don't visit every single weekend? When do they walk away from an exhibit or experience?

There are also tons of “Not We” visitors out there on the internet every single day writing reviews of our places that we can use to glean new insight.