everyone™ social

The Breakthrough of Employee Advocacy and Engagement

21

BRAND INNOVATORS AND THOUGHT LEADERS SHARE REAL-WORLD LESSONS AND INSIGHTS

INTRO

There are two forces that are driving the need for employee advocacy: the democratization of the control of a brand's image and the push to improve employee morale.

The idea behind employee advocacy is as simple as it is powerful. Empower your employees to become influencers on social media, and the resulting value will trickle back to your organization in terms of visibility, brand affinity, web traffic, conversion and brand leadership. In doing so, employees also feel more closely aligned to the brand strategy and mission—they become better connected. That's the 'what,' and today's most innovative organizations are already bought in. What's important to reconcile is the 'how' and 'why.'

Until recently, employee advocacy was in its infancy, with success being led by early adopters and transformational leaders. Now, the next wave of companies are diving in and creating programs — and they're looking for empirical guidance.

This guide is a go-to resource that connects you with insights from leading practitioners and thought leaders. You'll learn what you need to be thinking about, how to prioritize your focus, and how to spark a movement within your own organization.

We've asked 21 digital media, social, and transformational leaders—from all corners of the corporate universe—to candidly share what makes them excited, passionate, and bullish about this space. Progressive and diverse companies like Dell, Whole Foods, CenturyLink, SAP, FamilySearch.org, and Weber Shandwick have opened up to us to share their toughest lessons learned, keys to success and emerging opportunities.

We'll kick off the guide with a discussion on company culture and what organizational shifts need to occur for employee advocacy to be successful. We'll then move into the many ways that employee advocacy delivers value across the enterprise, beyond its traditional role in marketing. Finally, we'll drill into what defines employee advocacy success.

Happy reading,
and of course, reach out to
us if you have thoughts to add.
Tell us what you think
by tweeting to
@EveryoneSocial.

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Cultural Revolution

Your brand is more than your press releases, messaging framework, and corporate communications team. It's the sum of your employees and customers. Thanks to social media, the proliferation of online content, and emerging digital communities, key conversations are happening beneath the surface of your company's executive layer. Your brand is everywhere.

It's this shift that is inspiring companies to create more transparent and open cultures—a shift that is happening naturally, at the ground level. It's one of the most important changes happening in business today, and it's a powerful force that your organization can harness.

Within this context, your people—inside and outside of your organization—are your most valuable assets, and there's immense potential to channel existing, organic energy into a cohesive force. Industry leaders like SAP, Dell, and Centurylink are empowering their employees to have a true and authentic voice on behalf of the brand and are sparking industry-wide cultural shifts as a result. In this section, we'll walk you through the lessons that brand strategists, social media leaders, and communications experts are learning along the way.

1 HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS SECTION

"Create an environment that builds trust through human relationship development and empowers employees to be flexible, free thinking and fearless so that they can achieve breakthrough innovations by maintaining a high adaptability to change."

– Denise Holt, CMO and Co-Founder at GratZeez, Inc.

"Creating a social media culture in a company where your CEO is an avid user should be a breeze, right? That's what we hear, anyway. The truth is that everyone else still takes some convincing."

–Amy Heiss, Global Program Manager for Social Media Training and Activation at Dell

"RESPECT FOR THE ART AND NUANCE OF CONTENT CREATION FOR DIGITAL IS A CULTURAL SHIFT THAT EVERYONE MUST EMBRACE – SINCE CONTENT CREATION IS DEMOCRATIZED IN THIS 'EVERYONE IS SOCIAL' WORLD."

– Gail Moody-Byrd, Center of Excellence Lead for Digital Governance at SAP

1 HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS SECTION

"IT IS NOT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CUSTOMERS TO WORK TO UNDERSTAND YOUR BRAND. IT IS A MARKETER'S JOB TO MAKE IT AN EFFORTLESS DISCOVERY."

– Ernan Ronan, President at ERDM

"Employee advocacy has the power to achieve the cut-through that brands once took for granted. But it requires bravery and open-mindedness, in addition to a willingness to authorize a seismic cultural shift that gives everyone in the company a voice."

–Caroline Hughes, Owner at the Message Studio

"At CenturyLink, we have chosen to trust our people. They are the face of the company and we now empower them to tell the brand story as brand advocates. We make it easy for employees to invest in the brand. After that, we leave them alone."

–Wendy White, VP, Influencer and Community at CenturyLink

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Gail Moody-Byrd
Center of Excellence Lead for Digital Governance at SAP

Gail Moody–Byrd is the Center of Excellence Lead for Digital Governance at SAP, where she advises over 25 social media teams globally on strategy, structure and performance. She is recognized as an expert in digital and social media strategy, with a proven track record of driving demand through marketing initiatives. During 8 years at SAP, she's led Community Engagement Marketing for SAP Community Network and Integrated Planning for SAP's top priority business units. Gail was named AdAge Top Digital Marketer in 2013 and 2014. Prior to SAP, Gail's held numerous other leadership roles at Palm, McKinsey & Co and Levi Strauss & Co. to name a few. Follow her @gailmoody.

Wake Up! Let's Go to Work.

Wake up! It's time for all good social media thought leaders to declare that we've pivoted to a new era – the era of employee advocacy. What does that mean? Every worker who has a stake in their company's revenue should be writing and sharing authentic content about their products on social platforms to reach their professional networks. Why?

1 __ **Reach:** the sheer math of the multiplier effect (activating the networks of hundreds of employees)
2 __ **Credibility:** the superior credibility of company expert content (more believable than posts from faceless company accounts)
3 __ **Scale:** marketing teams are challenged to produce enough social content to feed the ever-increasing number of always-on channels/sites where a presence is needed

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW TO MANAGE THIS NEW REALITY?

1 __ Evolution of the business models of the social platforms necessitate this
2 __ Change management is fundamental
3 __ It's all about the content - THEN the tools

EVOLUTIONS OF THE BUSINESS MODELS OF THE SOCIAL PLATFORMS NECESSITATE THIS

It's clear that our social media platforms are operating as publicly traded companies evaluated on their ability to obtain revenue from businesses that pay for placement. The organic posting of content on these platforms from company accounts (social media 1.0) will continue to have diminishing returns. I fully respect their need to deliver financial returns to shareholders and employees – this is a natural outcome of their maturation as businesses.

Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn all released Q1 earnings reports recently. "LinkedIn reported on Thursday its slowest quarterly revenue growth since it went public four years ago. The surprisingly weak results followed Twitter Inc's on Tuesday. Twitter's stock fell by as much as 24 percent, slicing about $6 billion off its market value. Even Facebook Inc posted its slowest growth in quarterly revenue in two years last Wednesday, and its shares have fallen about five percent since.

– Reuters.com. May 1, 2015

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> *Edelman's research revealed employees are more trusted as sources than the CEO. This makes sense since you must be human and talk and act like a real person on social media networks. It's important to note that a company technical expert ranks higher than an ordinary employee. This is attributable to the fact that they're viewed almost like industry experts.*
>
> Three Customer Trust Factors that Boost Your Social Media Results, **Heidi Cohen**

CHANGE MANAGEMENT IS FUNDAMENTAL

We have to get employees who live outside the social media echo chamber to understand the piercing wake up call that we "inside the social bubble" are feeling. But birthing employee advocacy programs to make them successful requires an appetite for change management.

We all see it – the engaged employee has gone mainstream: "12 Steps to Be an Engaged Employee " USA Today . The gap between the headlines and really getting authentic engagement and content creation from product marketing, business unit leaders and influencers is massive. The social contributors you need to activate are not your CIO / CTO / CMO's staff of ghostwriters. No, you need content written and shared by internal experts on products and services that have the hands-on credibility followers seek.

HOW DO YOU MANAGE THE CHANGE?

1 __ Prove your case with data – "Mr./Ms. Employee, your contribution is a critical element of successful execution of our company's digital strategy and here's why..."
2 __ Put mandatory incentives in place (goals/KPIs) to make employees contribute (yes, its necessary...)
3 __ Be sensitive and recognize the difficulty some perceive this to be - writing, exposing their thoughts, and being transparent. People who are otherwise hugely competent in their work find it hard to admit that they're not good long form authors, a skill they'll need to blog. Allow for lots of coaching and figure out how coaching can scale using online resources.
4 __ Supplement your content supply by outsourcing content creation with the growing cadre of writing services. It'll relieve some pressure.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE CONTENT

I'm a big fan of the growing category of solutions that activate and enable employee advocacy in companies. They jumpstart employees' involvement in social media by serving up good content from your team and third parties that can be shared to make having a social presence easier for your employees. SAP has had some pilots in this arena and had really remarkable results.

Respect for the art and nuance of content creation for digital is a cultural shift that everyone must embrace - since content creation is democratized in this "everyone is social" world.

1 LET'S RECAP

Gail Moody-Byrd
Center of Excellence Lead for
Digital Governance at SAP

What do you as a lead digital marketer need to know to manage given this new reality?

1 __ Evolution of the business models of the social platforms necessitate this.
2 __ Change management is fundamental.
3 __ It's all about the content - THEN the tools.

As the closing line from my favorite film,
On the Waterfront says,
"Alright, let's go to work!"

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Ryon Harms
Managing Partner at Manifest Social

Ryon is the founder and President of Manifest Social. He was the director of social media at Farmers Insurance, where he created a massive social media program for over 5,000 local financial advisors. While at Farmers, he helped break the Guinness World Record for Most Facebook Likes on a Facebook Page with 2,000,000 Likes on 6/23/2011. He is also a frequent lecturer on social media at the Pepperdine Graziadio School of Business Management. Follow him @RyonHarms.

Get Over It, Your Brand Will Never Be Human

As the former head of social media at a big brand, I can tell you first hand that no matter how hard you try, and trust me I tried, people will never mistake your Facebook brand page for being a human. You can write a million friendly posts about random holidays and you can be sure that nobody in their right mind is ever, ever going to think those posts came from a real human being. And here's why: a Facebook Page is a transitional tool rooted in traditional marketing, and traditional marketing (where brands originated) was born in a world of mass communications.

So can a brand actually be human? Social media "experts" have been claiming that notion for years, and some even argue that it's "the only way to make your brand relevant today." To help us advance this argument let's assume the following positions:

1 __ Social media marks the transition from mass communications to masses of communicators
2 __ Only a human can be a human
3 __ Only a brand can be a brand
4 __ Humans use social networks to connect with humans, not brands

If we believe these assumptions, then we can get to the root of the problem that some influential social media pundits believe is "the biggest disservice influencers have done brands." By influencers they mean people like them: the highly successful social media experts whose networks of thousands of other wannabe social media experts retweet everything they say. Apparently these influencers have convinced their client companies that they can do the same for them.

As we've already assumed, social media is not mass communications, it is about masses of communicators. And since we've also assumed that only brands can be brands, and that only humans can be humans, we can see how these so-called social media experts have managed to be so influential – unlike brands, they are actual humans! So if these social media experts have been going around telling companies that people will confuse their brand for a human, then it is in fact a huge disservice, not to mention disingenuous.

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BUT HERE'S THE GOOD NEWS:

Ryon Harms
Managing Partner
at Manifest Social

Millions of people still watch cable TV, click on Google ads, and drive by billboards every day. And what's even better news is that if we take a step back and realize that a company is so much more than just a brand, that it is in fact a collection of humans striving towards a common goal, we get a glimpse of the true potential impact of social media.

My greatest success as a social media director wasn't growing our Facebook brand page from 6,000 fans to over 2 million. It was activating our thousands of local representatives across the country through social media. These local representatives never fancied themselves a brand, they just acted like themselves – like humans. We ultimately created a new sales channel for the company, not because we shoehorned our mass communications brand into a world of masses of communicators, it was because we understood the distinction.

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How Must Company Culture Shift to Prepare an Organization for Digital Transformation?

Denise Holt
CMO and Co-founder at GratZeez, Inc.

Serial Entrepreneur since age 23, co-founding and operating businesses ranging from local service companies, a design showroom, retail & global commercial imports, to digital media, mobile gaming & social business consulting. An industry thought leader in digital media, Denise is a speaker, podcaster, business advisor and educator in the areas of brand development, growth, content marketing, customer experience, brand advocacy & employee engagement. Named one of 30 VIP Influencer "Futurists" by IBM Social Business & PureMatter, on their project, "Hacking the Future of Work." Follow her @DeniseHolt1.

Disruption. Change Management. Exponential Growth. By now we are all familiar with these terms that seem to be heralding this digital transformation that is now taking place.

Data is the gold rush of our time. Organizations that learn to mine the right data and extract insights and meaning, will be the leaders of their respective industries. Information is the bloodline of our future, and information accelerates everything.

Consider Ray Kurzweil's Law of Accelerating Returns, which is based off of Moore's Law. This observed phenomenon has shown us time and again that growth (read: change) from information enabled technology doubles every year. Organizations are being turned into Exponential Organizations (ExO). This is the pace of successful businesses of the future.

Does your company have a culture in place that enables your employees to operate and innovate at the rate of speed that allows them to leverage accelerating technologies, in order to ensure your organization's success and survival in the future? How can you tell? What characteristics should this culture possess?

In Salim Ismail's book, Exponential Organizations, he states a key question to ask yourself, "How exponential are you? … How much have you internalized the philosophy of being an ExO? How does it inform your daily operations in terms of autonomy and social technology? How efficiently do you use the right tools, from dashboards to interfaces? And how open are you to risk, to experimentation, and even to failure?"

If we understand that knowledge doubles every year, and skills have a half-life of 2.5 – 5 years, it is critical that we foster a company culture that nurtures the extended training and leadership development to enable employees to stay current and up to date with cutting edge information. The best way to do this is by fostering community and communication in an environment that builds trust through human relationship development and empowers employees to be flexible, free thinking and fearless so that they can achieve breakthrough innovations by maintaining a high adaptability to change.

The first thing you, as an organization should do, is assess your internal company culture. I have created an infographic based off of The Competing Values Framework (CVF). One of the most important applications of the CVF is to be used as a guide for change.

If your company culture is all about rigidity, control and fear of risk, then you will not be able to empower your employees to be creative and innovative with the constantly changing and disruptive technologies of digital media in a way that communicates with your customer base and employees in real time.

If your company culture is all about the competitive angle as a results-based, do it first, do it now attitude, then you will be missing key elements that act like glue to hold a successful social business community together… Things like authenticity, trust, loyalty, REAL relationship.

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IN CONCLUSION

Denise Holt
CMO and Co-founder
at GratZeez, Inc.

Do you have the right tools in place to empower your employees to be autonomous? Are they enabled to take control of their own leadership development and extended education?

Developing an employee advocacy program, coupled with an intuitive platform like EveryoneSocial, provides a framework that will foster communication and growth. Activating your employees as advocates on behalf of your organization, encourages transparency and accountability, creating a feeling of internal partnership within the organization. The inherent sharing of information within an employee advocacy system, has the ability to curtail latency, increase agility, efficiency, and open the doors to progressive characteristics needed to foster initiative and innovation necessary for digital transformation.

SOCIAL TECHNOLOGIES ENABLE REAL-TIME ENTERPRISE.

CONSIDER AGAIN THE QUESTION, "HOW EXPONENTIAL ARE YOU?"

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Amy Heiss
Global Program Manager for Social Media Training and Activation at Dell

Amy Heiss leads the social media training and activation program at Dell. Her team is responsible for training and activating employee advocates across Dell. More than 15,000 team members have completed the certification required to speak on behalf of Dell in social media. She works with executives and subject matter experts across Dell to help amplify Dell's story and connect employees to customers in the social space. Amy has been a part of the Dell team since 2004 and lives in Austin with her husband and two children. Follow her @amyhatdell.

Launch Your Social Revolution

> *Engaging in honest, direct conversations with customers and stakeholders is a part of who we are, who we've always been. The social web amplifies our opportunity to listen and learn and invest ourselves in two-way dialogue, enabling us to become a better company with more to offer the people who depend on us.*
>
> **Michael Dell**, CEO

At Dell we are very fortunate to have a CEO who understands the value social media brings to his business. Michael Dell posts all of his own content on Twitter and Facebook. He also regularly reads blogs and forums and sometimes alerts our social teams to issues before even our own automated tools discover them.

Creating a social media culture in a company where your CEO is an avid user should be a breeze, right? That's what we hear, anyway. The truth is that everyone else still takes some convincing.

So how did we accomplish getting people to give up valuable time and invest in becoming more social? We've found three key pillars to our success:

1 __ Build an internal brand that radiates excitement and fun
2 __ Build a community and a sense of belonging to something special
3 __ Provide valuable information and be a long-term resource

BUILD AN INTERNAL BRAND THAT RADIATES EXCITEMENT AND FUN

It's not just that the Social Media and Community University (SMaC U) program is recognized as the hub for social media training and information at Dell. Everything we do is planned with an eye for interactivity, humor, and creativity. From our course content, to our communications, to the events we host, our goal is to shed the stereotype of stuffy, overwrought corporate training.

The SMaC U team was hired with these qualities in mind. Even the name itself, SMaC U, has helped set the tongue-in-cheek tone of our program. This gets employees intrinsically motivated to participate and keeps them coming back for more.

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BUILD A COMMUNITY AND A SENSE OF BELONGING TO SOMETHING SPECIAL

We keep our community informed and engaged through our internal social media platform, Chatter. The SMaC U Chatter group is the largest/most active group at Dell where our members share interesting articles, pose questions to the group related to social activity, discover upcoming training opportunities, and just enjoy fun social events like March Madness bracket challenges.

The act of becoming SMaC certified also brings perks to our employees. They gain access to events, trainings, and tools that non-certified members miss out on. Their peers see them taking advantage, and they in turn want in on the action.

Some benefits reserved for certified team members include:

1. Social media trivia happy hours
2. Love notes sent on Valentine's Day (thanks to our friends at SASI for this idea)
3. Movie days with a social media theme and associated lecture
4. Chef
5. Catfish
6. Access to posting/content curation tools like EveryoneSocial

PROVIDE VALUABLE INFORMATION AND BE A LONG-TERM RESOURCE

To nurture this social media-driven culture, we regularly invite external social media experts to speak with our SMaC certified team members on many topics, such as how to improve their personal LinkedIn presence. We regularly crowdsource training topics for our internal "Power Hour" series, which covers a wide variety of social media issues (from dealing with trolls to the legal implications of Periscope and Meerkat).

We also host a social media UnConference for our certified employees each year. It is an opportunity to hear from customers, other companies, social media experts, and each other on a range of social and digital topics.

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THE MORAL OF THE STORY

Amy Heiss

Global Program Manager for Social Media Training and Activation at Dell

It's investments like these that helped us to create lasting relationships with the internal community and move them beyond just training and into the realm of activation, where they now provide true value to the company via social media. When we saw that over half the employees who chose to take one of our courses chose again to take more classes and become fully SMaC Certified, we knew our strategy was working.

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Caroline Hughes
Owner at the Message Studio

Caroline owns the Message Studio, a U.K. based, marketing company focusing on employee advocacy, sales enablement and content production. Having spent most of her career running marketing teams within a heavily regulated corporate environment, Caroline is no stranger to realizing the desire to deliver compelling, impactful messages to market against a backdrop of strict legal and regulatory guidelines. She recognized the value of employee advocacy immediately and believes it can be used to reinvent any company's engagement model if the right mindset is in place. Follow her @Message_Studio.

The Rich Rewards Ahead of Us

Employee advocacy has the power to achieve the cut-through that brands once took for granted. But it requires bravery and open-mindedness, in addition to a willingness to authorize a seismic cultural shift that gives everyone in the company a voice. It has the potential to unite the sales, marketing and internal communications teams once and for all. And for many it will demand a complete u-turn of any existing social media policy.

It will be easier for some companies than others. For those in regulated or security-sensitive environments, it'll be one of the scariest things they've ever done! The legal teams will lose sleep and the naysayers will cry louder than ever. But the rewards are rich and companies who do not embrace the opportunity will eventually be drowned out by the noise of those who do.

As well as deepening customer relationships, a well-chosen platform and a well-engineered implementation can help a company engage with all stakeholders, including local and national Government, regulatory bodies and the media. Even in the case of reactive reputation protection, the combined reach and influence of a collection of employee voices is almost guaranteed to be far greater and better received than one centrally-issued, corporate message.

FORTUNE FAVOURS THE BRAVE EXTERNALLY

When employee advocacy takes its foothold we see a transformation in the way companies interact. They give us permission to get to know them properly; not just by what they want us to know, but how they feel about things and what influences their thinking. We see the passion of the people behind the corporate messages. We become more connected with them, more understanding and have fewer reasons to be suspicious.

For companies yet to embark on this adventure, there may be a few craggy mountain paths - some with a sheer drop on both sides - but in the end the brand will earn respect for its transparency, and the passion, commitment and cultural beliefs of its people will shine through.

STAR EMPLOYEES WILL EMERGE

Inside the organization, the trust that is placed in people will engage and motivate. Those who write well will become the central-lifeblood. The ability to communicate concisely and with impact will become the first bullet on every customer-facing job description. And those who bring curious minds, intelligent viewpoints and the capacity for deep thinking will command an even higher price. These individuals will gradually become leading lights for their co-workers and enjoy a raised profile externally.

INTERNAL CHALLENGES MUST BE FACED HEAD-ON

Everyone who is passionate about being part of the collective voice must eventually be able and be trusted to participate. Behind the scenes, diversity and inclusion policies will need to offer more support for those who struggle with essential skills. The learning and development agenda will need re-focusing to support the new social priorities.

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FINAL THOUGHTS

Caroline Hughes
Owner at the Message Studio

MY MESSAGE TO BRANDS IS FOUR-FOLD:

1. Be gutsy and willing to take that step.
2. Be savvy enough to find a solution that balances risk against opportunity.
3. Prepare for and embrace the cultural changes that will take place.
4. Never, ever stop encouraging and helping your people to be part of the journey.

With the right platform and a willingness to invest in skills and social media enlightenment, a savvy company will be able to tap into an incredible life source. For some it will be like finding an oasis in the searing heat of the desert. They will start to see a very different future; a new path that will be laid by each and every trusted employee, one by one, share by share.

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Ernan Roman
President at ERDM

Ernan Roman is the President of ERDM, which specializes in Voice of Customer (VoC) research to identify Customer Experience strategies that generate significant increases in response and revenue. Their clients include IBM, MassMutual, Gilt, Microsoft, QVC and Norton AntiVirus. Ernan was named by the Online Marketing Institute as one of the "2014 Top 40 Digital Luminaries" and by Crain's B to B Magazine as one of the "100 most influential people in Business Marketing". His latest book is titled, Voice of the Customer Marketing. He also writes the widely read blog, Ernan's Insights on Marketing Best Practices. Follow him @ErnanRoman.

Your Brand, Your Employees and the Voice of Your Customer

LET'S START WITH A FEW SOBERING STATS

1 — According to a study by IBM/Consultancy, "80 percent of consumers stated that the average brand doesn't understand them as an individual.

2 — According to IBM's Digital Analytics Benchmark, due to brand confusion and lack of consumer understanding, "shopping cart abandonment rate continues to rise, reaching 73.7 percent in March 2015."

Developing a strong brand is a continual circle of interaction with your brand, what it stands for, how it is conveyed by employees and the experience it delivers. Here are some key questions that you need to ask along the way.

IS YOUR BRAND MESSAGE UNDERSTOOD AND TRUSTED?

It is not the responsibility of customers to work to understand your brand. It is a marketer's job to make it an effortless discovery.

One of the keys to developing a strong brand is to develop a culture of brand trust. If consumers trust your brand, and receive a compelling value proposition, they will opt-in to share increasingly deep and personal preference information in exchange for your promise to deliver relevant [trusted] information and offers. These insights are based on research findings from over 15,000 hours of Voice of Customer (VoC) research conducted by our firm with customers and prospects of major brands such as IBM, MassMutual, Gilt, QVC, Microsoft, Norton AntiVirus and HP.

We call this sharing of increasingly deeper levels of personalized data in exchange for valuable brand information, the Reciprocity of Value Equation. As a result of these preference-based interactions, consumers are more willing to respond to communications and offers from the company. And, this customer-driven information exchange results in uniquely accurate databases that consistently drive 25% to 50% increases in revenue.

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HOW DO YOUR EMPLOYEES TRANSLATE YOUR BRAND MESSAGE TO CUSTOMERS?

Every interaction a prospect or customer has develops impressions. It doesn't matter if it is an employee, subcontractor, vendor, etc. Consistency in high value brand experience, messaging, and product information across all channels is beyond essential. “Be” your brand every step of the way.

To do this you need to provide proper brand training at every level. Additionally, empowering employees with the ability to provide superior experience, with a voice that is heard, and with recognition for providing brand excellence cultivates an atmosphere of success.

IS YOUR CUSTOMER’S EXPERIENCE TRUE TO YOUR BRAND?

In order to provide a high quality customer experience you need to know how consumers define a “Good Customer Experience” with your business. By engaging with customers at every stage of experience and lifecycle, not just during the sale or renewal process, you will be able to create trust and value throughout their relationship with your company.

One of the most important things you can do is pay attention. Pay attention to what consumers are asking, buying, saying, leaving, browsing, engaging, opening, ignoring, abandoning and wanting. Know. Don’t assume. You cannot deliver the right experience if you do not understand what is needed.

The insights you gain based on listening to the Voice of your customers serve as powerful tools for your business. According to Doug Stein, President of HMS National, the leader in the home warranty industry, “Our VoC retention research provided remarkably clear customer insights which generated significant results. VoC insights helped us reconceive our entire renewal strategy. The result: a 25% increase in first year customer retention. Specifically, insights into our value proposition, media mix sequencing and timing, and overall messaging created a customer research based foundation our marketing team utilized to drive the creation of an innovative, integrated, multichannel marketing campaign. This new program had immediate success."

Doug adds, "VoC insights also helped us think far more broadly about the customer experience and related drivers of retention. In addition to using the marketing related insights from our initial project, we undertook further VoC research to help rethink the customer experience across every point of contact in our company.

Based on these additional VoC insights, we re-architected not only the elements of employee-customer interactions, but also the empowerment of our employees and 3rd party partnerships that support service delivery. This broadened, strategic view has driven a 50% increase in first year customer retention rates making them best-in-class, DMA Echo-Award worthy, and the kind of results that marketers and business leaders dream about.”

1 TAKEAWAYS

Ernan Roman
President at ERDM

1 __ Change your company culture at every level from “how does this benefit us?” to “how does this benefit the customer?”
2 __ Be single minded about the customer experience so there is consistent messaging, information, product knowledge and customer service at every touch point and every contact.
3__ Realize that improved Customer Experience strengthens trust. And, trust is the foundation that builds brand, communication and good experiences.
4__ Re-evaluating processes based on customer insights enables your company to cultivate more effective employee interactions and provide product offerings that are competitively differentiating.

DEVELOPING A STRONG BRAND IS A CONTINUAL CIRCLE OF INTERACTION WITH YOUR BRAND, WHAT IT STANDS FOR, HOW IT IS CONVEYED BY EMPLOYEES AND THE EXPERIENCE IT DELIVERS.

1

Wendy White
VP, Influencer & Community at CenturyLink

Wendy White is a high-tech b2b marketing executive with deep expertise growing marketing functions from the ground up and leading through change. After 20 years creating high impact marketing programs for tech giants Intel, Motorola and Microsoft, Wendy established the marketing organization for a growing venture-backed cloud company. Wendy drove the go-to-market strategy, building the marketing function from the ground up to establish the company as an innovation leader in the enterprise cloud market. She parlayed that expertise to lead a boutique start-up marketing firm for one year with clients in the cloud, DevOps and iPhone app markets before being recruited back to corporate.

Today Wendy leads social business and enterprise comms for CenturyLink's cloud and hosting business. Wendy's expertise includes: strategic marketing, B2B communications, influencer and analyst relations, demand generation (inbound and outbound) sales enablement, social business, executive and corporate communications, thought leadership, and branding/positioning. Deep experience building out marketing infrastructure and implementing core marketing tools (web CMS, sales and marketing automation, SEO/SEM and social). Follow her @wendywhite.

Trusting People, Building Value

The sea change over the last several years in marketing is actually quite easy to understand. People trust people rather than corporations. This trend becomes truer with every tweet and status update on social media and every review on Yelp.

We have had anecdotal evidence of this change for a while now and the data is beginning to confirm what we have all known intuitively. Edelman PR's 2015 Trust Barometer demonstrated that "a person like yourself" is viewed as far more trustworthy with information about a product or company than the CEO, by a margin of 20 percentage points.

What does a brand marketer do when the evidence is clear that your audience views all the traditional ways you reach them – ads, press releases, even CEO speeches, skeptically? It's not like you have thousands of people with millions of social connections to tell your story through.

Or do you?

The same report from Edelman shows that employees and in-house technical experts are some of the most trusted and credible sources. This data supports what most marketers have known to be true – that your employees are a key element of your brand. But how many of us have built programs around this maxim, with tools and resources and measurement?

At CenturyLink, we have chosen to trust our people. They are the face of the company and we now empower them to tell the brand story as brand advocates. Our employee advocacy program provides a repository of news and information employees can easily share with their social networks. Articles, industry news and other types of branded content are sorted in easy-to-identify categories with suggested social updates and images.

We make it easy for employees to invest in the brand. After that, we leave them alone.

1

ADVOCACY, NOT PROMOTION

With our program, what employees share and whom they share the information with is their decision. The program is completely voluntary. It has to be. All kinds of philosophical, management and even free-speech problems could occur if you require your employees to share information. Our goal is simply to make sharing information easier by providing a platform to do so. Doing this helps them build their professional brands and the CenturyLink brand at the same time.

Building such a program approach raises the bar on the quality of the story you're telling. Employees are not going to build their social presence with data sheets and press releases. Employees will only advocate on the things that they are passionate about. That might be innovation in general. It might be a case study about charities using technology. It's their passions that will communicate the authenticity that is required in this new marketplace of social trust.

Anecdotal feedback from our employees participating in the program shows they appreciate how easily they can share information, as well as keep up to date on industry and company information. Feedback from users includes: "EveryoneSocial makes it easy to support CenturyLink's brand in the marketplace, with clients and prospects." As well as: "I think this tool makes socializing the latest news very easy – I love the ability to schedule sends for different articles and the fact that sample text is prepopulated that you can keep, change or add to. Plus, there are many news stories I might miss were it not for this tool."

MAKING A REAL IMPACT

Some may ask whether a voluntary program can really work. Are we setting ourselves up for too much management scrutiny by even calling it a program? In our view the value is clear; by putting a formal program in place you can measure the impact and power of your employee network.

In the 10 short months our program has been in place we've been able to double the social-driven traffic to our website, all attributable to employee social shares. Employees are also excited about how the program enables them to easily build their social networks and become more social savvy. This is especially beneficial to our sales team as they try to use social selling tactics to close business.

1 FUTURE PLANS

Wendy White
VP, Influencer & Community at CenturyLink

While we've already realized significant value from Employee Advocacy, our program is still in its infancy. This year we'll more than double employee participation while also expanding the content we are making available for sharing.

But, I'm really excited about empowering the employees even more. As we move forward, this program will be of the employees, by the employees, and for the employees. They will suggest content from their segments and build their own passions into the core of the program.

And maybe "passion" is the underlying message in the Edelman data. The world is awash in messages and information. But, passion feels like it is in short supply. So, people recognize it when they see it.

We are entering a new era of marketing. It will look like a risk to radically personalize brands in this way. But, I think the real risk is turning a deaf ear to what the audience is clearly telling us. The successful brands of the future will be owned by a vast collection of individuals rather than corporations.

1

Jill Rowley
Social Selling Evangelist

Jill Rowley eats failure for breakfast so she can dine on success for dinner. During her 20+ year career, Jill has spent six years in management consulting, 13 years in SaaS software sales at Salesforce.com and Eloqua and is currently a social selling evangelist, keynote speaker and workshop leader. She is the founder of Jill Rowley #SocialSelling and an advisor at various technology startups. Follow her @jill_rowley.

The Mind of the Modern Buyer

The modern buyer has changed more in the past 10 years than in the past 100. Just think about your own experiences discovering, exploring, and validating solutions. Rather than reaching out to sales reps, you're doing your own research ahead of time, and by the time that you are ready to engage with a company, you've already become a product expert (and sometimes enthusiast). Modern buyers are digitally driven, socially connected, mobile, and empowered with information. When they're frustrated, they tweet about it—they have an unparalleled amount of choice and a voice that's louder than in past generations.

Businesses need to be there, in-the-moment, in our buyers' key moments of need. Here's what you need to need to know about the modern buyer.

We are self-educating. We're controlling our own processes—which are unpredictable and nonlinear. In the past, sales leaders have traditionally been the sources of answers, access, and information. We latch on to bits and pieces of knowledge that are distributed, through multiple channels, online.

We're navigating a networked economy. The concept of 'six degrees of separation' has evolved with the widespread adoption of social media to the point where we're now connected by fewer than five degrees. Now more than ever before, we have visibility into different networks and can connect to people with a simple click of a button. Thanks to the social web, we're able to connect to not only hundreds but thousands of people. Information, resources, and recommendations are making their way across these networks at speeds that are faster than what the human eye can detect—organizations need to position themselves as distributed nodes throughout these networks. It's this approach that yields visibility.

We command trust. We trust our peers and networks more than corporate communications. We're more likely to act on referrals from friends and colleagues than we are ads—and when we do take action upon an ad, we'll make sure to check our references in the background. Trust is something that companies can't take lightly. One wrong turn can shatter your reputation.

We're your stakeholders. Today's buyers are also your employees. We can become your employees or move on from being your employees. There's a saying floating around at Amazon: "What if we invest in our people and they leave?—Well, what happens if we don't invest in our people, and they stay?" No matter where your employees fall inside or outside of your organization, it's critical that they're empowered as brand ambassadors.

1 THE BOTTOM LINE

Jill Rowley
Social Selling Evangelist

We thrive on energy. If your employees believe in what you're doing as an organization, they're going to carry your message further to reach more people. For HR, this trend translates into a stronger recruiting pipeline. For sales, you'll end up with an inbound sales machine. Across this chain of events, it's the buyer who bears the ultimate impact—we know that happier employees mean better products and services.

We're skeptical. Modern buyers and employees, alike, know when organizations are 'talking the talk.' We can sense manipulation, egocentrism, and narcissism—traits that we want to stay as far away from as possible. You can't say that you have a transparent, open culture when employees aren't allowed to email the CMO. You can't say you're collaborative when teams are competing in cutthroat ways. If your own employees can't trust you, how can your buyers? We're skeptical of companies that position themselves as something that they're not.

The bottom line is that modern buyers view a company's workforce to be its heart and soul. We sense corruption, can identify patterns of manipulative behavior, and latch on to the organizations that truly embrace transparency, team empowerment, and empathy. We crave a sense of belonging, as buyers, too.

More Than Marketing

Employee advocacy programs will often originate in a company's marketing or communications department. Very quickly, however, organizations will see change that affects the entire organization—especially in sales and HR.

The idea is simple: invest in your employees, encourage them to be active on social, and empower them as the thought leaders and experts that they are. They'll return the investment by not only talking about your products and services but also helping recruit new hires (HR), listening to social feedback (product development), liaising with industry influencers (brand reputation), and engaging in conversations with customers (support).

With this perspective in mind, employee advocacy is more than marketing. It's a relationship-building engine that's built on collective people-power. It's the most direct and impactful way to open your company's four walls and unleash the passion that brings your employees to work each day.

This section will teach you how to expand your employee advocacy program beyond your company's marketing department. Learn how organizations such as Adobe and FamilySearch.org are weaving empirical program success into their core DNA and into expanding use cases.

2

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS SECTION

"At Kelly we find and place the best candidates possible for our clients. Social media is a huge part of our sourcing strategy and our recruiters find candidates in social every day."

– John Patterson, Manager of Global Social Media at Kelly Services and Lorrie Sole, Senior Marketing Manager at Kelly Services

"For one, a company is a version of a family. Success requires transparency, trust, and empowerment. People require nurturing. Every day should include wellness checks on the health of each employee, the business entity, and the consumer."

–Alison J. Herzog, Global Social Media Director at Dell and former Senior Marketing Manager at FamilySearch.org

"SALESPEOPLE HAVE GENUINE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR SOCIAL NETWORK, WHICH GIVES THEM A TRUST ADVANTAGE OVER PAID MEDIA OR CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS."

– Kurt Shaver, Founder at The Sales Foundry

2

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS SECTION

"YOUR BRAND IS THE WAY YOUR EMPLOYEES COMMUNICATE WITH CUSTOMERS ON THE PHONE, THE WAY THEY START AND END AN EMAIL. YOUR BRAND IS THE WAY YOUR EMPLOYEES SOLVE PROBLEMS TIMELY AND WITH QUALITY OR LEAVE CUSTOMERS HANGING."

– Pam Moore, Founder at Marketing Nutz

"When a company shares something on social media, it is not nearly as influential as when a trusted friend or connection shares or recommends the content. Providing content that your employees willingly share with their connections is a win for the company and for the employee. This, however, doesn't mean encouraging employees to share marketing messages or ads for the company. It should be content that is interesting, relevant, helpful, unique and human."

– John Patterson, Manager of Global Social Media at Kelly Services and Lorrie Sole, Senior Marketing Manager at Kelly Services

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"The evolution of social business requires departments from all areas to work together. More than a value-add for just the marketing department, employee advocate programs showcase people – not policies and products – and can reinvent the perception of a brand."

– Alison J. Herzog, Global Social Media Director at Dell and former Senior Marketing Manager at FamilySearch.org

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The Ubiquity of Advocacy

Lorrie Sole
Senior Marketing Manager
at Kelly Services

&

John Patterson
Manager of Global Social Media
at Kelly Services

Lorrie Sole is the Senior Manager of Global Social Media and Marketing Email Strategies at Kelly Services, a leader in workforce solutions. In her current role, she is highly effective at interpreting organizational priorities, setting strategy and managing key projects to reach organizational strategic goals. She has designed and developed Kelly's global social media roadmap that guides the organization through key social media categories that support Kelly's business initiatives. Follow her at @theemailczar and https://www.linkedin.com/in/lorriesole.

John Patterson is the Manager of Global Social Media at Kelly Services and an emerging leader in the social media marketing space. Using a mix of traditional marketing strategies executed over new mediums, social media tactics pulled from deep experience, and more mistakes than he's willing to admit John has been able to create and contribute to projects for brands like: GM, FCA, Samsung, Evite, Reddi Whip, Tyson, Snack Pack, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, ConAgra Foods, Disney Interactive Studios and many more. In his current role as Manager, Global Social Media for Kelly Services, John provides strategic direction for all social media activities within the U.S. and 33 countries around the world. His responsibilities encompass activities ranging from content oversight, to employee advocacy, to executive level social media education. Follow him @johnpatterson85.

The concept of engaging your audience to build advocacy is not new. As long as there has been social media marketing, advocacy has been something every brand has strived towards. However, it wasn't until recently that brands began to leverage their largest untapped community of advocates, their employees. While this practice may live within the marketing function at many companies, it is not solely a marketing function.

Many other parts of a business can benefit from employee advocacy. Sales, recruiting, HR, and much more can take advantage of branded content to help build not only the company's brand, but their own. This can prove to be very valuable to employees in all areas.

EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY IN RECRUITING

At Kelly we find and place the best candidates possible for our clients. Social media is a huge part of our sourcing strategy and our recruiters find candidates in social every day. So, how does employee advocacy fit into the recruiter's world? By offering them the opportunity to show their expertise.

When we are trying to attract top talent it is important for that talent to see our recruiters as experts in their field. Offering proof to candidates that our recruiters can, and will, put them in the best position for them is key to securing the best talent.

2.

Employee advocacy isn't just a B2C tool. Building the personal brands of our recruiters also helps build our clients' confidence in Kelly. Being confident that a staffing firm is knowledgeable about your industry and recruiting in general is key to a client with real staffing needs. Personal branding also extends into the B2B side of our business where our business development representatives use content to portray their expertise in certain products and verticals.

EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY IN SALES

Selling is about relationships. Building a relationship with your client is essential to a successful partnership. Part of that relationship has to be a deep understanding of the client's needs. At Kelly we pride ourselves on understanding our client's staffing needs.

Sometimes before they do.

However, with the rise of technology in the staffing industry it's important that we reinforce our savvy with both new clients and current clients alike. Employee advocacy has been a great way for us to do this. Sharing relevant content curated by sales leadership and marketing is allowing our sales people to establish themselves as trusted experts in the industry while positioning the Kelly brand in a positive and powerful way.

EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY AND BRAND PERSPECTIVE

Many companies look to educate their customers on the services and products they offer. They often struggle with brand perspective, being only thought of for just one product or service.

At Kelly, almost every employee has someone say to them "oh yeah – you are that Kelly Girl company" or "oh you are that temporary employee company." Our brand needs to constantly remind our candidates and business prospects that we are so much more than that.

Marketing is responsible for telling a brand's message and story. However, what if employees in your organization, with about 200-500 friends or followers posted your brand's mission, story, offerings, culture and jobs?

Who better to share that story than the people who make the company run at every level? Your employees are one of the best ways to share your brand's depth and breadth, something Marketing could not do alone at such a personal level.

2 THE BOTTOM LINE

Lorrie Sole
Senior Marketing Manager
at Kelly Services

John Patterson
Manager of Global Social Media
at Kelly Services

Relationships are often built through common interests between people, not brands. When your employees share those updates with their friends, the reach of each post is increased and more people become aware of the business and its products and services.

By making your company culture more visible on social media, employees not only attract customers but also draw in potential candidates who might want to work for the company. Marketing departments do a great job, but having employees participate in the storytelling of your brand will really make a difference to your brand perspective and ultimately sales.

2

Kurt Shaver
Founder at The Sales Foundry

Kurt Shaver of The Sales Foundry is a Social Selling Expert. After a 20-year career in corporate sales and sales management, the former VP of Sales realized that social networks like LinkedIn were changing the world of B2B sales and decided to start a sales training company.

Since 2010, Shaver has taught thousands of salespeople how to connect with decision makers using LinkedIn. Clients include Hewlett Packard, TelePacific Communications, Nexus-Dimension Data, Maritz, and City National Bank. Kurt is the creator of the Social Selling Boot Camp and has spoken at events like Dreamforce, Selling Power magazine's Sales 2.0, and LinkedIn's Sales Connect. Follow him @kurtshaver.

Your Company's Greatest Inbound Marketing Asset

There are two main activities involved with social selling. The first activity is a traditional sales process involving networking, introductions, referrals, and searching for ideal prospects. The only thing new about this Outbound Prospecting technique is that salespeople use social networks like LinkedIn and Twitter instead of the yellow pages, business journals, or even the prospect's website.

The second activity is newer. It involves creating, sharing, and commenting on content via social networks. Inbound Marketing has become a popular lead generation technique as more buyers do research online before engaging a salesperson. Marketing professionals have used social media for years for Inbound Marketing. However, salespeople were late to the game.

In fact, as online commerce grew over the last 20 years, some experts predicted it may even result in the extinction of the B2B salesperson. Fortunately, "news of the B2B salesperson's death has been greatly exaggerated." to paraphrase Mark Twain.

That is because social networks like LinkedIn saved the beleaguered B2B sales person. With the proper skills, salespeople can leverage social networks and become their company's single greatest inbound marketing resource.

Here are four reasons why:

1 __ Sales has one of the largest headcounts of any department in a company. Therefore, Sales has more "amplifiers."
2 __ Salespeople have the largest social networks, particularly within B2B networks like LinkedIn.
3 __ Salespeople have the most experience communicating with prospects and customers. It's a core requirement of their job.
4 __ Salespeople have genuine relationships with their social network, which gives them a trust advantage over paid media or corporate communications.

2 IN CONCLUSION

Kurt Shaver
Founder at The Sales Foundry

This idea of the salesperson as trusted content distributor is not new.

When I started in field sales 30 years ago, my company's marketing department loaded me up with brochures, data sheets, catalogs, and even a few wall posters. I kept them all in the trunk of my silver Chevy Cavalier. A big part of my job was being the content distributor. I drove around the Atlanta metro area meeting with customers and decided which content to share with them in order to build relationships and, when appropriate, advance the sale.

Occasionally, I'd read something in a trade magazine and run off copies at Kinkos to share with my customers. In those days, my trunk was my content library. My car was the distribution medium. My Franklin Planner address book was my social network. Fast forward 30 years and smart salespeople are doing the same thing with social networks. Marketing now creates digital content for salespeople and smart ones will still augment company content by curating industry news that they read online. This raises their value in the customer's eyes and influences the purchasing decision.

Chevy Cavaliers, Franklin Planners, and Kinkos have all come and gone, but sharing valuable content with prospects and customers will never go out of style. Teach your salespeople how to share content to position themselves as subject matter experts and be prepared for a flood of inbound leads.

2

Alison J. Herzog
Global Social Media Director at Dell and former Senior Marketing Manager at FamilySearch.org

Alison J. Herzog directs digital and social media initiatives for Dell and previously led digital experiences at FamilySearch.org, a non-profit family history website. Herzog is known for innovation, being data-driven, and tactical straightforwardness. Herzog has been featured by SlideShare, the American Marketing Association, and highlighted at various industry conferences. Follow her @alisonjherzog.

Because People Matter

There are two simple mantras every business should live by: (1) people matter, and (2) relationships are worth investing in. These two principles apply regardless of an employee or customer audience. Every individual has worth and besides a payoff in good karma, businesses that are holistically thoughtful perform at an increased rate.

The first company I worked for many years ago focused on asking superficial questions about consumer-packaged goods. It involved focus groups investigating what consumers liked or didn't like about a newly launched food product. Perhaps I was too fresh-faced to see the entire process, but because I am a questioner, I wanted to know what problem it solved and how it impacted a consumer's everyday.

I don't have time for superficial questions. If you do, you're doing something wrong.

For customers using FamilySearch.org, a non-profit family history website, the superficial answer to doing family history might be guilt or curiosity. However, a deeper reason and more significant purpose is that knowing where you came from actually affects your success in life. A study cited in the New York Times found that "the more children knew about their family's history, the stronger their sense of control over their lives, the higher their self-esteem and the more successfully they believed their families functioned. The 'Do You Know?' scale turned out to be the best single predictor of children's emotional health and happiness."

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO AN ORGANIZATION?

For one, a company is a version of a family. Success requires transparency, trust, and empowerment. People require nurturing. Every day should include wellness checks on the health of each employee, the business entity, and the consumer. If employees are cared for—genuinely cared for—the other two should naturally follow a positive path. Employees who are invested in result in lessened turnover and increased engagement, which equals productivity and innovation. Disengaged employees resulted in a cost of $450 million in 2013. It's clear which side smart brands need to be on.

2 PEOPLE POWER MOVEMENT

Alison J. Herzog
Global Social Media Director at Dell

Engaging employees through digital can eliminate barriers and facilitate collaboration across large entities with many time zones, cultures, and job applications.

So, why not ask superficial questions? Don't employees want free snacks? Or flexible schedules? Well, yes, is likely the answer. But why? What is the root? What are the values associated with item?

The sun is rising on employee advocacy. Employee values of trust, transparency, and empowerment are all fulfilled within this corporate element. Internal software can allow employees to collaborate from all business units, eliminating silos, and encouraging innovation. Simple governance policies and social media training can empower each employee to connect more closely with the end consumer and to grow their own network. The result? More engaged employees; an end-to-end relationship from every department and division with your customer thereby creating an interconnected community.

Asking a battleship to change direction quickly is not reasonable. To genuinely invest in employee experience requires commitment. Commitment requires all levels of buy-in, resources, and infrastructure. But it's worth it. Why? Because (1) people matter, and (2) relationships are worth investing in.

2

The Secret Sauce of Employee Advocacy

Michael D. Yoder
Social Media Consultant at Spectrum Health System

Michael Yoder is the social media consultant for Spectrum Health System in Grand Rapids, MI, one of the top 15 healthcare systems in the United States. His responsibilities include corporate social strategy, governance, monitoring, employee advocacy, social care, training and education.

In addition to his responsibilities at Spectrum Health, Michael is the founder and leader of LinkedUp Grand Rapids, a business networking group with over 14,000 members. Michael regularly speaks at colleges, universities, conferences, workshops, trade associations and civic groups. He typically presents on current trends and issues related to social networking and social media marketing for businesses and business professionals. Follow him @mdyoder.

Let me start by stating that social media and marketing are two very different things. Social media is about conversation, community, relationships, collaboration—it's about people. Marketing is communicating the value of a product, service or brand to customers, for the purpose of promoting or selling that product, service, or brand. Marketing and social media are not mutually exclusive, but they are also not the same thing. When used properly, they work very well together. Unfortunately, we often get off the rails by treating them as if they were the same.

As far as employee advocacy is concerned, the opportunity exists because of social media. This, in turn, can have a positive impact on a company's marketing. And, not only does this impact marketing, but it can impact the entire company—recruitment, sales and customer care.

The advantage our employees represent is a significantly broader and greater reach than the combination of our corporate presence in social media. Plus the secret sauce is our employees' social networks and connections that are fueled by relationships built on trust. And it is well known that people do business with people they like and trust!

When a company shares something on social media, it is not nearly as influential as when a trusted friend or connection shares or recommends the content. Providing content that your employees willingly share with their connections is a win for the company and for the employee. This, however, doesn't mean encouraging employees to share marketing messages or ads for the company. It should be content that is interesting, relevant, helpful, unique and human.

2 IN CONCLUSION

Michael D. Yoder
Social Media Consultant at Spectrum Health System

When we share this type of content instead of blasting marketing messages at people, it puts both the company and our employees in a positive light. Our employees are going to want to recommend or share the content with their networks of connections. Bottom line is it will make them look good, which can have a positive impact on their professional development and career opportunities. And, it can build goodwill and trust for the company because the content is being shared by a trusted connection.

Once a company has earned their trust, people are going to be much more open to the occasional marketing message or ask. They will also be interested in working for the company and possibly give the company the benefit of the doubt when it comes to a customer care issue.

ONCE A COMPANY HAS EARNED THEIR TRUST, PEOPLE ARE GOING TO BE MUCH MORE OPEN TO THE OCCASIONAL MARKETING MESSAGE OR ASK.

Cory Edwards
Head of Social Business Center of Excellence at Adobe

Cory Edwards is head of Adobe's Social Business Center of Excellence. He is responsible for the company's social business operations and integrating social media into the way Adobe does business. Prior to Adobe, Cory was director of social media at Dell.

Cory is also an adjunct professor at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. He has a BA in Public Relations from BYU and an MBA from the W.P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University.

You can read about Cory's thoughts on the changing landscape of social media for businesses on Adobe's Digital Marketing blog. Follow him @coryedwards.

The Heart of a Social Business

Today's consumers no longer just buy products – they buy into the people behind the brand.

Word of mouth is indeed invaluable and employee advocacy programs have emerged as a modern word-of-mouth tactic to strengthen marketing efforts. But employee advocacy isn't just about marketing, and the right program can drive results across multiple areas of business. Here are just a few examples of how employee advocacy can expand the reach of social marketing efforts.

EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY ACROSS THE SOCIAL BUSINESS

Sales. As an extension of the sales process, the right advocacy program can increase revenue. Employees typically have ten times more followers cumulatively than their corporate social accounts. Even a small increase in brand advocacy can generate significant revenue growth.

HR. As a recruiting tool, employee advocacy programs can help attract top talent. Satisfied employees share thoughts and opinions about work, and people listen. At Adobe, we've seen socially active employees drive 80 percent more views to job listings.

Support. Knowledgeable employees who are engaged on social media channels can answer questions, address concerns and provide valuable feedback.

2 IMPLEMENTATION

Cory Edwards
Head of Social Business Center of Excellence at Adobe

Successful employee advocacy programs don't just happen; they are strategically implemented. Ongoing training where employees are taught sound judgment and given guardrails is essential. Brands also need to provide employees with fresh and meaningful content that extends beyond company-specific news, but also relates to the industries and customers the brand serves.

Advocacy programs position employees as authorities and experts in the field, so be sure to recognize your team members as such. Give them the resources that they need to self-direct their career growth.

The evolution of social business requires departments from all areas to work together. More than a value-add for just the marketing department, employee advocate programs showcase people – not policies and products – and can reinvent the perception of a brand.

2

Pam Moore
CEO & Co-Founder at Marketing Nutz

Pam Moore aka "Pam Marketing Nut" is the CEO & Co-Founder of Marketing Nutz, an agile, full service experiential social brand, digital content marketing & conversion optimization media agency that helps businesses not just do social or be social, but be socially relevant. She also hosts the popular Social Zoom Factor podcast providing entrepreneurs to Fortune 100 brands information they need to zoom turbo in both life and business.

Pam is ranked by Forbes as a Top 10 Social Media Power Influencer (#5), is an avid international keynote speaker and best-selling author. She has 15+ years experience helping entrepreneurs to Fortune 100 organizations build winning brands and integrated platforms that sustain business and life. Pam believes we must first inspire our audiences to connect, we then focus on building relationships by helping them achieve their goals. Inspire – Connect – Achieve is her motto in both life and business.

Pam left the corporate world 5 years ago with a mission to build a more agile, affordable agency to serve businesses of all sizes. Her first agency was sold within 2 years. Marketing Nutz was launched in 2012 and has proudly worked with clients such as British Council, Lowe's Home Improvement, IBM, Laser Spine Institute, Sony Playstation Group, Aruba Networks, Marcos Pizza, Holiday Inn, ServiceMaster, and Emerson. Follow her @pammktgnut.

Customer Experience and Perception is Your Brand

Many business leaders don't realize their most valuable, powerful marketing and relationship building asset sits within the walls of their organization.

Your brand is what people see, hear, feel, experience. Your brand is not simply your logo, the scripted words on your website or the flowers lining the walkway into your corporate office.

Your brand is the way your employees communicate with customers on the phone, the way they start and end an email. Your brand is the way your employees solve problems timely and with quality or leave customers hanging.

Your brand is also what is tweeted, posted, pinned, video taped and live streamed across the web and social networks. It's what your employees post on Twitter, Google Plus, Instagram, SnapChat and Pinterest. It's the photos of the weekend soccer games and Saturday night wild parties they post to their Facebook private stream.

There is no black line in the social media and corporate branding sandbox separating the personal brand of your employees from your corporate brand. If people know that the employee works for your organization, a brand perception is being imprinted into the eyes, ears and heart of those seeing, hearing and listening to it with each and every social media post and update.

It doesn't matter if you require them to add "my tweets are my own" to their Twitter bio, people still know they are a representation of your brand, good or bad.

You can't control what customers think of you. You also can't control what people think of your brand based upon the hundreds to hundreds of thousands of brand impressions your employees are making daily.

No corporate social media policy is going to help you control what your employees tweet, post and say online or offline.

Either your employees live your brand promise or they don't. Either they represent the true meaning and value proposition of your brand or they don't. There is no in between. There is no middle ground. It's either a good brand impression or it's not.

2

FINAL WORDS

Pam Moore
CEO & Co-Founder at Marketing Nutz

Why not inspire and empower your employees to be the best advocates that they can humanly be for your brand?

It starts in the walls of your organization. It starts in employee meetings, client meetings, boardroom, team outings and everything you do together as an organization. Empower your employees to power up your brand. Empower them to deliver the best possible customer experience at every brand touch point.

Invest in your greatest asset, your people. Help them build, maintain and ignite their personal brands. People buy from people, not logos. You get what you put into business. You also get what you put into people. If you want the best out of your people and you want them to deliver the best to everyone who comes in contact with your brand then you must prove to them you care. You must invest in them. You can never go wrong by investing in human beings, period.

Success Matters

Successful employee advocacy programs don't emerge on their own. Like any new initiative, they require planning and structure –and over time, you'll want to build scalable, repeatable processes that are unique to your organization, audience, and people.

Every company is different, which means that there isn't a clear blueprint for what success means. It ultimately depends on your brand mission and specific use case. We'll show you how leading organizations like Hill Holiday, HP, and Whole Foods are tapping into their own unique growth levers to build a program that shines in empowering employees and boosting the bottom line.

3

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS SECTION

"However, content sharing is very personal, and most of us are pretty picky about what we post. We carefully curate our feeds to give a polished version of our lives and we think about how the content we share will be perceived by others. In fact, a New York Times study found that 94% of people 'carefully consider how the information they share will be useful to the recipient.'"

– Brad Blake, SVP and Associate Director of Digital Strategy at Hill Holiday

"Employees need to be positively engaged, rewarded and recognized. They need to understand the critical role that they play in their company's success. They need to be part of a positively crafted and narrated corporate culture. Only then will employees go that extra mile to treat customers well. Only then will customers be truly open to making purchases."

– Leslie Gaines-Ross, Chief Reputation Strategist at Weber Shandwick

"OUR GOAL IS TO LEVERAGE THE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF AMBASSADOR CONNECTIONS TO INFLUENCE AND GENERATE PREFERENCE FOR OUR INDUSTRY LEADING PRODUCTS AND SERVICES. WITH A GOOD MIX OF EMPLOYEE FUNCTIONS FROM ACROSS THE SOFTWARE BUSINESS, INCLUDING SALES, ENGINEERING AND LEADERSHIP, THIS PROGRAM HAS BEEN A PIONEERING INITIATIVE FOR HP."

– Zealous Wiley, Senior Digital Marketing Manager at HP

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS SECTION

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Brad Blake
SVP and Associate Director of Digital Strategy at Hill Holliday

As SVP of Digital at Hill Holliday, Brad Blake oversees digital programs, content and experiences for brands including Bank of America and John Hancock. He also helps them integrate social throughout their entire organization, from customer service to employee training. When not talking too much about #socialmedia, he's usually talking too much about fitness or nutrition. Follow him @bradmblake.

Core Pillars to a Successful Program

When building our brands' social presences, it's natural to think, "why don't we tap into our employees to help spread our content?"

It sounds so good on paper. The company has content to share. Employees have friends and followers with whom to share. All we need to do is empower and incentivize our employees to share content and we'll increase our reach and engagement! Hooray!

However, content sharing is very personal, and most of us are pretty picky about what we post. We carefully curate our feeds to give a polished version of our lives and we think about how the content we share will be perceived by others. In fact, a New York Times study found that 94% of people "carefully consider how the information they share will be useful to the recipient."

Given what we know about peoples' natural sharing behavior, here are a few things to think about when considering building or expanding an employee advocacy program.

HELP YOUR EMPLOYEES CONNECT WITH OTHERS

When we share content personally, or even as a brand, we generally think, "how will this content be useful to our friends, fans and followers?" When we're thinking about creating content to support employee advocacy, though, we need to think, "how will this content be useful to our employees to position themselves and connect with their friends, fans and followers?"

That's a different way than we usually think when creating brand content. While most employees are interested in keeping up with the latest information about their employer, it doesn't mean their friends are.

FOCUS ON YOUR CULTURE AND THE HUMAN PART OF YOUR BUSINESS

There are likely people in your company who are actively sharing information and news about your business to help them network, connect with clients, and build their own professional acumen. However, it's likely the vast majority of your employees use social media to connect with friends and family to share things about their life, things they personally feel passionate about, and to position themselves as smart, funny, and way cooler than they were in high school.

If you want employees to share your content, think about the things that make your company unique, meaningful, interesting, or fun. What makes employees proud to work there? Even when it comes to new product releases or new services, can you share in a way that's human and compelling? And if you have a crappy culture with employees who aren't proud or happy, you might want to focus on changing that first.

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DON'T LOOK FOR A TOOL UNTIL YOU HAVE A STRATEGY

Brad Blake
SVP and Associate Director of
Digital Strategy at Hill Holliday

It's easy for us to get wowed by the latest tool or technology, and they do help streamline and support employee advocacy. However, if you don't spend time thinking about both basic human sharing behavior, and your own organization's and employees' culture, values, and passions, then a technology could very well end up being a solution looking for a problem.

Developing a sound strategy up front may take some time, but it will take far more time if you just put a tool in place and then have to try a hundred different ways to get people to use it.

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Natanya Anderson
Director of Social Media, CRM, and Customer Care at Whole Foods Market

Natanya Anderson is the Director of Social Media, CRM, and Customer Care at Whole Foods Market. She has over 15 years experience in digital communications strategy and execution grounded in a relentless focus on the customer. At Whole Foods Market she is concentrating on how an extensive local digital footprint merges with a strong brand presence to create a unique customer experience that differentiates a brand, drives loyalty, and supports the retail experience. Follow her @NatanyaP.

Employee Advocacy's Toughest Questions

There's a broad question about the role of employee advocacy within organizations.

Before we dive into this question, however, we need to take a step back and recognize that every business is already a social business. Our team members, customers, and stakeholders are already talking about our companies—it's a fact of life of today's digital age.

The question we should be asking is how to harness this energy in a way that's beneficial to our customers, team members, and core business lines. And that question raises even more questions:

Do we need a specific program?
If sure, what should be the foundations of that program?
How do we know if our organization is ready to be social?
Do we push changes subtly and incrementally or with bigger strides?

The answers to these questions will vary from company to company, and in the majority of cases, the path forward won't be black or white. The highest performing employee advocacy programs are custom-tailored to our teams and their personalities. Here are 3 tips that I've found helpful in navigating this process.

IS YOUR BUSINESS READY?

When it comes to 'readiness' for employee advocacy, the question shouldn't be "if." It should be "what" and "when." The first step is to understand the conversations that team members are already having about your business—put together a list of trends that are emerging, and piece together your business' social story as seen through their eyes. Next, compare this story with your marketing goals and communication priorities.

If the gap is too wide, your company may not be ready for employee advocacy. because you can't force this key alignment.

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Every employee post in an advocacy program can't be subject to multiple rounds of approval. We want team members to feel comfortable in their own skin—and feel empowered to use their own words. If they can't be themselves they simply won't participate.

Much like other applications of social media, employee advocacy is only going to highlight the challenges that we have as brands rather than provide a mechanism to overcome them. We need to be honest with ourselves about our state of command and control, our willingness to take risks, and the amount of viable content that's worth sharing.

Rest assured that almost every company is going through these questions and challenges. It's an important starting point to help us establish our most viable long-term strategy.

CAN WE ESTABLISH THE RIGHT TEAM?

The most impactful employee advocacy programs require support from many minds and disciples ines. For success a cross-functional team that spans legal, HR, and marketing is a must. Do you have the institutional relationships and ability to bring this team together?

Start by finding a core group of internal advocates and champions. From there, you'll be in a strong position to rally troops throughout your organization.

HOW DO WE TEST THE MODEL?

Employee advocacy is a brand new concept, which means that team members are going to need some onboarding, best practices training, and guidance. Your brand will need this as well to buy into the program.

The most efficient and impactful way to get started is to assemble a set of power users—almost like an advisory board. With this perspective, you'll create and refine your program best practices.

By starting small, you'll uncover opportunities for refinement, iteration, and future exploration. Couple these qualitative perspectives with your usage metrics, and you'll create a framework that continues to build upon itself.

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THE BOTTOM LINE

Natanya Anderson
Director of Social Media, CRM, and Customer Care at Whole Foods Market

WHEN IT COMES TO EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY, YOU DON'T NEED TO REINVENT THE WHEEL.

Even at the very beginning, you can start by taking a step back to uncover where team member energies are already working. Start with your greatest asset, your people, and facilitate and celebrate the conversations they are already having in social channels.

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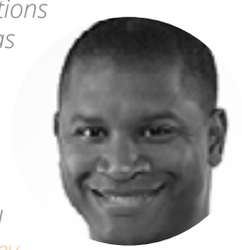
Zealous Wiley
Senior Digital Marketing Manager at HP Software



Zealous Wiley is a marketing leader with a unique blend of digital marketing and communications experience and a knack for leading through influence. He believes in the power of storytelling as he leads and manages HP Software's global web content and publishing strategy. He is also responsible for developing HP Software's global employee social media education, activation and advocacy programs, focused on accelerating amplification and driving demand.

Prior to HP, he managed several global communications programs at Yahoo!, where he was responsible for media and industry analyst relations, product positioning, domestic and international press events, digital media and executive communications. Follow him @zdwiley.

Growing HP Software's Advocate Economy

Employee advocacy continues to be one of the hottest topics in social. With our primary HP Software corporate accounts (LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook) hitting on all cylinders, we wanted to expand our reach with the help of our employees across the business. With 86% of B2B IT buyers using social media to make purchasing decisions and 57% of the buying process complete before a sales rep is contacted – employee involvement in social media is no longer just a marketing strategy to drive awareness and preferences, it must be a business priority to accelerate sales.

Prospects and customers don't want to engage with a "logo" – they want to engage with other people. According to the 2015 Edelman Trust Barometer report, 43% of B2B decision makers trust employees of vendors, including industry and technical experts, over the CEO or PR department. This means that when marketing distributes any form of communication, whether it's an infographic, video, blog post, or an awesome ad campaign, it's being received by people as coming from your logo… unless you activate your employee base.

Here at HP Software, we saw a huge opportunity when it came to activating our teams to increase awareness, generate preference for our products and services, and accelerate the purchasing decision. Studies have found that there is only an 8% overlap between the Twitter followers of a company's employees and the brand's Twitter account, suggesting employee social networks offer a way of reaching a different audience. We are fortunate to have a leadership team who understands and supports the importance of social media and employee advocacy. They embrace the convergence of employee branding and corporate marketing. Our employees represent the largest marketing potential based merely on their sheer size and reach.

In May of 2014, we partnered with EveryoneSocial to launch the HP Software Ambassadors program. We selected EveryoneSocial based on their platform's ease of use, ability to support our complex business, mobile apps, and scalability. We wanted a solution that enabled us to increase awareness, reach and mindshare at the lowest distribution cost with highest engagement value. EveryoneSocial enables us to share new content with our employee advocates immediately, empower them to decide when and where to share it, and track everything.

3 IN CONCLUSION

Zealous Wiley
Senior Digital Marketing Manager at HP Software

Our goal is to leverage the hundreds of thousands of Ambassador connections to influence and generate preference for our industry leading products and services. With a good mix of employee functions from across the software business, including sales, engineering and leadership, this program has been a pioneering initiative for HP.

Employees are a powerful, untapped resource in many organizations. They have strong networks that extend far beyond your brand channels, and people in their communities are more likely to engage with and trust the content when it comes from someone they know.

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Richard Margetic
former Director of Worldwide Social at Intuit's Small Business Group

An international speaker on the topic of social business, Richard Margetic is the former Director of Worldwide Social for Intuit's Small Business Group. Richard has worked in web technology as a customer advocate for the past 20 years, including roles as a Senior Managing Global Web Consultant for IBM and PwC Consulting and an extended stint at Dell as Director of Global Social Media where the work of his team earned numerous awards. Follow him @ByJove.

Beyond Amplification

Most companies come to the concept of employee advocacy after recognizing that social has a marketing benefit. They then realize that employees are active in social media. Putting these together, they determine that employees can help spread marketing messages for little to no investment. So, they put in a program that allows for the syndication and amplification of brand messages.

For those who give this more thought, they come to the realization that this scattershot method is inefficient and may even backfire. Employees use social to connect with family and friends. This means that business messages are going out across graphs that are optimized for social interactions. Companies can realize some benefit from the amplification of messages, but it's not compelling enough to increase the investment. Many companies stop at this point, believing that employee activation has limited impact on business objectives. Many employees won't engage because it feels impersonal and inauthentic. This exposes a fundamental misunderstanding of the opportunity social brings to businesses. Social media is not at its best as a broadcast medium. It brings a new dimension to business, one more personal, more direct, more immediate. Using social to merely syndicate content is like using a 2D model in a 3D world.

Adding in this new dimension opens up opportunities at the intersection between businesses and customers. Yes, using employees as a one-way conduit will amplify brand messages. Stop there and you'll miss the biggest opportunity of employee activation.

The sweet spot is where employee skills, customer needs and business objectives intersect. This realization moves a company beyond brand advocacy and requires more effort than just asking employees to share the latest marketing messages with family and friends. It requires intelligent content development and curation. It requires investment in employees to help build their expertise and credibility. It requires a company realizing bringing value to prospects, customers and employees brings value to the business. Moving from brand advocacy to true customer advocacy positions the business to fully take advantage of the new dimension social brings.

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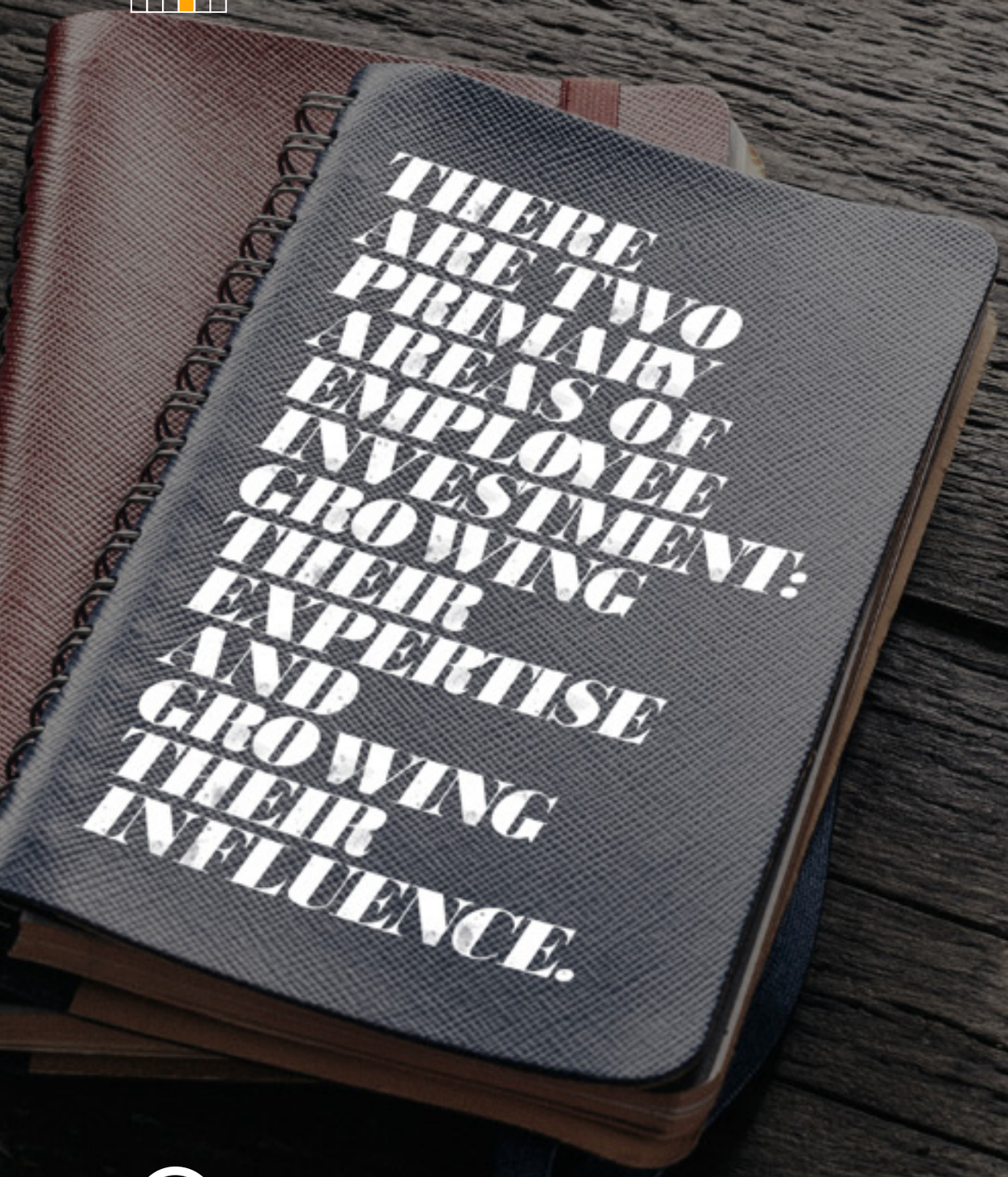
EMPLOYEE INVESTMENT



Richard Margetic
former Director of Worldwide Social
at Intuit's Small Business Group

With these realizations, the recognition comes that not all employees' social graphs are of equal importance. Those employees who have knowledge that maps most closely to customer needs become the most valuable and are worth the most investment for social media activation.

There are two primary areas of employee investment: growing their expertise and growing their influence.

Growing an employee's expertise gives the company a more valuable asset, customers a more valuable connection and employees more career options.

Growing an employee's influence gives the company more exposure, customers more access and employees more visibility.

As employee advocacy models grow, listening will precede speaking, monologue will become dialogue, and conversations will become relationships. If your company still sees employee advocacy programs as merely brand messaging amplification, you're leaving a lot of value on the table.

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Anneke Seley
Founder & CEO at Reality Works Group

Anneke Seley is founder and CEO of Reality Works Group, a digital/social and inside sales strategy and implementation consultancy. Anneke is recognized as a pioneer and thought leader in the field of inside sales, as the designer of Oracle's global multibillion dollar inside sales organization and coauthor of "Sales 2.0: Improve Business Results Using Innovative Sales Practices." Reality Works Group helps companies from startups to global enterprises design, launch and measurably improve process-driven and technology-enabled sales teams. Follow her @annekeseley.

Closing the Loop in Social Selling

Of all the departments to transform into advocates, the sales team – your company's revenue generators – should be the easiest and most compelling. Sales quota carriers and business development experts thrive on promoting your brand and products to the outside world.

But sales professionals can be especially resistant to learning and adopting new practices and technology, especially when they are making their numbers without them.

Here are some ideas on what you can do to make social selling work:

GET SALES EXECUTIVES AND FIRST LINE MANAGERS EXCITED – OR SCARED

Whether you use industry data, stories of social selling wins, or losses to the competition, give sales leaders reasons to be champions of social selling. One large technology company's executive team famously got on board when the company lost a big deal to a competitor because the buyers couldn't find any executive team members on LinkedIn.

ENABLE MOST-LIKELY-TO-SUCCEED TERRITORIES FIRST

Using a combination of data on your most social customers and markets and the sales teams who are most enthusiastic about opting into social selling, start your support and enablement programs in territories and selling roles that have the most upside potential. In many companies, inside sales is a logical place to start, given these reps already use a wide range of technology and a measurable process to connect with buyers who are already engaging on digital and social platforms.

INVOLVE SALES PEOPLE IN YOUR PROGRAM, CONTENT DESIGN AND ENABLEMENT

Rather than issuing one-way directives, ask sales people for their ideas. What kind of training, tools and content do they find most helpful? What input are they getting from customers on content or events? What obstacles have to be removed in order for social selling to be embraced?

3.

Fast-growing social companies facilitate regular communication and collaboration between marketing and sales – or invest in marketing resources that report (or are dedicated resources) to sales – to continuously improve programs and accelerate results. Some companies have identified program-stopping roadblocks in compensation plan design, systems access or performance that had to be addressed before having any hope of getting sales to buy in.

MAKE HEROES AND ADVOCATES OUT OF THE EARLY SOCIAL SELLERS

Put your marketing skills to use and promote social selling programs and results company wide, highlighting the reps that are social selling leaders. Research shows a correlation between top performing reps and social selling usage, so you should also be able to show that social sellers make more money. Top companies know the power of peer influence and have created social seller champion programs. Reps are teaching other reps why and how it's worth learning new ways to sell socially.

DESIGN AND BUILD A MEASURABLE, SCALABLE PROGRAM

It's not hard to find one-off anecdotes about how sales people are closing deals using some form of social selling. But few companies have built repeatable processes that are followed predictably by teams or the entire sales force. Social selling leaders are clear about the measurable business outcomes they expect from investments in social selling, by when, and from whom as well as the plan for expansion.

DEFINE WHAT YOU MEAN BY SOCIAL SELLING – AND WHERE IT FITS WITHIN THE SALES PROCESS

What does social selling mean in your company – sharing valuable content with buyers? Having a customer-centric profile on social networks? Using connections for introductions? Listening to buyers who engage in social platforms? Knowing a buyer's influencers? Researching industry trends to provide insights? Following trigger events? Sharing insights in online communities? Using video chat? All of these have been described as social selling, so sales professionals need guidance on where to focus. Social selling playbooks by selling role are a way to visually document where, when and how sellers should use social practices.

ENABLE SOCIAL SELLING WITH TECHNOLOGY, BUT DON'T OVERDO IT

Choose technology very selectively. Results-driven sales reps will gravitate to the tools that are easiest to learn and use. Tools that integrate with CRM will have a leg up on other products, too, as this is where sales teams track and forecast their opportunities. This means it will be easier for you to measure the influence of social selling on revenue – assuming you've set up the system in such a way that you can track the business impact.

3 RECAP

Anneke Seley
Founder & CEO at Reality Works Group

Marketing plays a crucial role in social selling programs with the best results. By following these suggestions and getting inside the minds of your sellers, you should be able to transform your sales team into your most enthusiastic and successful of all employee advocates.

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS ON WHAT YOU CAN DO TO MAKE SOCIAL SELLING WORK

1. GET SALES EXECUTIVES AND FIRST LINE MANAGERS EXCITED – OR SCARED
2. ENABLE MOST-LIKELY-TO-SUCCEED TERRITORIES FIRST
3. INVOLVE SALES PEOPLE IN YOUR PROGRAM, CONTENT DESIGN AND ENABLEMENT
4. MAKE HEROES AND ADVOCATES OUT OF THE EARLY SOCIAL SELLERS
5. DESIGN AND BUILD A MEASURABLE, SCALABLE PROGRAM
6. DEFINE WHAT YOU MEAN BY SOCIAL SELLING – AND WHERE IT FITS WITHIN THE SALES PROCESS
7. ENABLE SOCIAL SELLING WITH TECHNOLOGY, BUT DON'T OVERDO IT

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The Employee Engagement Loop

Leslie Gaines-Ross
Chief Reputation Strategist at Weber Shandwick

As Weber Shandwick's Chief Reputation Strategist, Leslie Gaines-Ross is the architect of groundbreaking, award-winning research into CEO and corporate reputation, CEO transitions, corporate rankings, online reputation, social CEOs and reputation recovery.

Leslie is one of the world's most widely recognized experts on reputation, specializing in how reputations are built, enhanced and protected. She is the author of two books, CEO Capital: A Guide to Building CEO Reputation *and* Company Success and Corporate Reputation: 12 Steps to Safeguarding and Recovering Reputation.

She serves on the Executive Advisory Panel of Corporate Reputation Review and was named one of the "100 Most Influential People in Business Ethics" by Ethisphere Magazine in 2014 as well as one of the 2014 Top 100 Thought Leaders in Trustworthy Business Behavior by Trust Across America. Leslie's blog can be found at reputationXchange.com. Follow her at @reputationRx.

Employee engagement is the new "it." During the past few years, the C-level set has come to the realization that an engaged and satisfied workforce produces strong corporate reputations and leads to solid corporate performance. As a long time observer of trends in corporate reputation, I can attest that now more than ever, every executive suddenly wants his or her employees to be engaged.

What everyone wants, however, is not necessarily what everyone gets. Recent employee activism research from our team at Weber Shandwick shows that a mere three in 10 global employees are deeply engaged at work and that nearly two in 10 employees openly express their disaffection online.

Such a deep-seated lack of engagement does not bode well. In research that Weber Shandwick and Powell Tate conducted with KRC Research on Civility in America and corporate reputation, we explored the price to be paid when employees are disengaged. When employees on the front lines are discourteous and not engaged in their company's success, consumer spending is dampened. Nearly half of American consumers (52%) report experiencing incivility while shopping. And, no less than six in 10 Americans (61%) report either refusing to buy or advising others not to buy products or services from an offending company. We are not talking insignificance here.

Employees need to be positively engaged, rewarded and recognized. They need to understand the critical role that they play in their company's success. They need to be part of a positively crafted and narrated corporate culture. Only then will employees go that extra mile to treat customers well. Only then will customers be truly open to making purchases.

When engaged employees treat customers well, customers in turn develop a high opinion of corporate brands. Purchases increase, and the company's image shines. Everyone benefits. The employee engagement loop is almost a perfect circle. Engagement matters and matters big time.

3

IN CONCLUSION

Leslie Gaines-Ross
Chief Reputation Strategist at Weber Shandwick

An engaged, empathetic and collaborative workforce can greatly improve the buying experience. Unengaged, disgruntled employees do just the opposite, harming consumer perceptions for months or even years to come.

Because of this direct connection between employee engagement, on the one hand, and customer excellence, consumer goodwill and corporate performance on the other, employee engagement has become the new competitive weapon wielded by corporations in their battle to differentiate themselves and their products from competing brands. There is reason behind this trend as the decision to engage employees and make them an integral part of the corporate culture directly affects corporate reputation. Engagement can often make the difference between success or failure.

LOOKING DOWN THE ROAD

Now that you made your way through the guide, what's next? What should you take away?

For one, the need for transparent and open culture is foundational. Your stakeholders, inside and outside of your company, are your brand. It pays to empower your employees as connectors in your community.

As programs evolve and strengthen, companies will weave employee advocacy into the fabric of their DNA. Early adopters are already seeing benefits such as brand lift, higher community engagement, stronger net promoter scores, and deeper levels of conversion. They're also boosting employee morale, retention, and job satisfaction.

Employee advocacy may begin as marketing programs but will quickly expand into other functions including HR, sales, talent acquisition, corporate responsibility, product development, customer service, and more.

With knowledge and access becoming ubiquitous—shared inside and outside of your organization—employees will become more confident in integrating social communications into their day-to-day roles as your teams will not only have direct channels to each other but also to the outside world.

THE TIME TO START IS NOW. HERE'S WHY.

The precedent is in place.
This guide introduced you to 21 employee advocacy leaders who have explored the earliest stages of this new marketing terrain. Companies like CenturyLink, Kelly Services, and Intuit have laid strong foundations that next-generation adopters can build upon. By starting your program now, you'll still be ahead of your competition.

People love social.
The bottom line is that people like to do business with other people, and employees are doing just that on Twitter, LinkedIn, and even Facebook. Customers love social. Employees love social. The energy is ready for your business to harness. Software provides the missing link between your brand, employees, and your customers.

The tools are here to help.
One of the biggest barriers to program success is time. It needs to be easy and fun. For the program manager, it could be time-consuming to find content that's worth sharing or making sense of the data. The employees want an easy and simple way to become informed, gain knowledge and engage with their networks. That's where EveryoneSocial comes in. As the #1 employee advocacy platform and support team trusted by top brands, we make the complex simple.

SO WHY WAIT?

To learn how EveryoneSocial can provide you with the tools and technology needed to develop an effective employee advocacy program, visit EveryoneSocial.com or email us at advocacy@everyonesocial.com.

For those of you with a printed version of this guide, you can download an electronic version here >>>