
How to Have a Successful Employee Advocacy Pilot Program

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So, you're ready to start an employee advocacy program but want to test the waters first?

Before diving in, you have the option of getting set up with either the free enterprise trial or the paid pilot program. Launching either of these with a select subset of employees will help you learn what works, what doesn't, and what resources may need adjusting. This eBook is based on the experiences of current and past customers and clients and the steps they took to create successful pilot programs.

Following these recommendations will put you on a path for success right from the start.

Align Your Program With Overall Business Goals

First, you need to identify specific business goals so you can determine, evaluate, and measure how your employee advocacy program will get you there.

Here are some examples of ascertainable goals for your program.



- ☑ Increase site traffic by X%
- ☑ Increase sales leads by X%
- ☑ Decrease cost per lead by X%
- ☑ Achieve an employee participation rate of X%
- ☑ Increase employee productivity
- ☑ Increase social impressions, clicks, and number of referral candidates for recruiting
- ☑ Increase number of followers and reach on employee networks

Assess Culture

Company culture is paramount to the success of an employee advocacy program.

Some company cultures evolve naturally, while others evolve over time. There are many different types of corporate cultures, but the one best suited to employee advocacy is an empowered culture where employees feel fully engaged and actively participate in the success of the company.

Company culture must be authentic. Employees won't settle for a mandated culture – one issued by upper management as a one-pager on “who we are.” Truisms like, “actions speak louder than words,” “commanded and not demanded,” and “aspire to inspire” are more than just clichés. They are popular because they are effective. Make them your guiding force.



Focus on Engagement First

Your program is only as good as your employees' commitment to it.

Before starting your pilot program, evaluate how engaged your employees are. Without motivated employees and a culture based on trust and empowerment, your program simply will not flourish.

Here are some questions to ask before starting your pilot program:

How Engaged Are Employees Currently?

We know that [employee engagement](#) is good for business. In fact, Gallup [suggests a 21% greater boost in profitability](#) for companies with high engagement. But they also report that only 30% of American workers are engaged in their jobs. How can you tell if employee engagement is high or low?

Annual engagement surveys, along with employee analytics (metrics on current work schedules, turnover rates, participation in meetings, relationships outside



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of immediate team, relationships with management and influence of colleagues) can give you a glimpse into how engaged employees are in the workplace.

Are Your Employees Willing to Share?

Trust builds confidence and allows employees to feel empowered to act as brand ambassadors on social media. Don't force employees to become ambassadors or punish them if they don't post on social media. Instead, incentivize with gamification or other reward programs to encourage participation rather than punish those who don't.

Remember, employee advocacy is completely voluntary. Your employees can choose whether or not they want to carry out each activity, and they can completely opt out of your program at any time. That's why it's important to always keep your employees best interest in mind and the marketing benefits will follow.

Are Your Employees Afraid to Share?

Many employees would share and promote your company's initiatives on social media, but they're

scared to do so. They simply don't want to say the wrong thing. With employee advocacy, the marketing team steers employees in the program in the right direction with the right content to promote, and provides editable captions for employees to share. This way, they'll know they're safe from posting anything that they shouldn't.

Are They Allowed to Share?

What is your current policy on sharing social media posts? Do you have one? Is it in need of an update?

It's good to encourage employees to share news about the company and industry they work in. As ambassadors of the company, their opinions matter. Ask for input on the type of information they would like to share and also make sure to follow up by getting feedback on the content that they are given to share. Write concise guidelines on what should and shouldn't be posted so employees and management aren't worried about sending out inappropriate material. Make this information easily available.

Where Marketing Communications Gaps Exist

Marketing plays a vital role in any organization, but may not be in contact with every department of your company on a consistent basis.

To pilot and run a successful [employee advocacy program](#), the marketing department will need to have a familiarity with each department of your organization. The purpose of this is to know what departments are likely to engage in the employee advocacy program, how familiar they are with social media, if they already share, what content resonates with those employees and their networks, etc.

A great resource to help you find this information is your human resources department. HR is a wealth of information when it comes to employee data. They use hundreds of employee and workforce analytics, ranging from the most basic to highly complex key performance indicators (KPIs). They can give you aggregate information about absenteeism, retention,

employee turnover, performance evaluations, overtime hours, and results of employee surveys. They can even conduct surveys for you.

By studying employee opinion surveys on leadership behavior – where managers are evaluated on their coaching and developing, communication, and interpersonal skills – competencies are measured, and HR can help identify if and where communication gaps exist.

Additionally, you want overhead support from your executive office. **When you get executive buy-in, it's a huge benefit to the success of your program.** You'll also want leaders of each department to be on the same page as you. Work with them to understand their goals, so you can help them achieve success. They'll likely return in kind with support and help in expanding your employee advocacy program.

How Are They Currently Engaging Employees?

HR often sees building a corporate environment, where employees feel enthused and connected to their jobs, as part of its core responsibilities. But does HR determine your company culture? Do you know what your culture is and are employees living that culture and benefiting from it? Relationships with direct managers, belief in senior leadership, and pride in the company are all contributing factors to employee engagement, so where exactly does HR fit in?

During the hiring process, HR can evaluate whether or not management candidates possess the right “people skills” to engage staff after they are hired. Good management means executives have the emotional intelligence to manage, lead, and develop a team. Retraining managers who received low scores on employee opinion surveys will empower staff and drive up engagement.



How Can It Be Improved?

An article by SurveyGizmo on employee engagement and how to measure it, wrote that **employees want three things from their jobs:**



**Meaningful vision of
the future**



A sense of purpose



Great relationships

Are your employees getting that from their current jobs? Does the work environment promote and encourage that type of corporate climate? HR must be proactive with employee surveys to track these components in order to gauge and improve employee engagement.

Get Buy-In

Before you begin your pilot program and start amplifying social media content, you need to have buy-in from your executive leadership team. Having higher-ups who are excited, enthused, and support the program, sets a great example for the employee advocacy pilot team. How do you get leadership to stand behind and back your employee advocacy program?

By answering the following questions, you will have the foundation to build a business case that highlights the benefits of employee advocacy for the executive leadership team:

What is Employee Advocacy?

At its essence, employee advocacy is about motivating and making it easy for your employees to participate in your organization's marketing efforts by performing activities and sharing company messages with their personal social networks. It's taking the success of



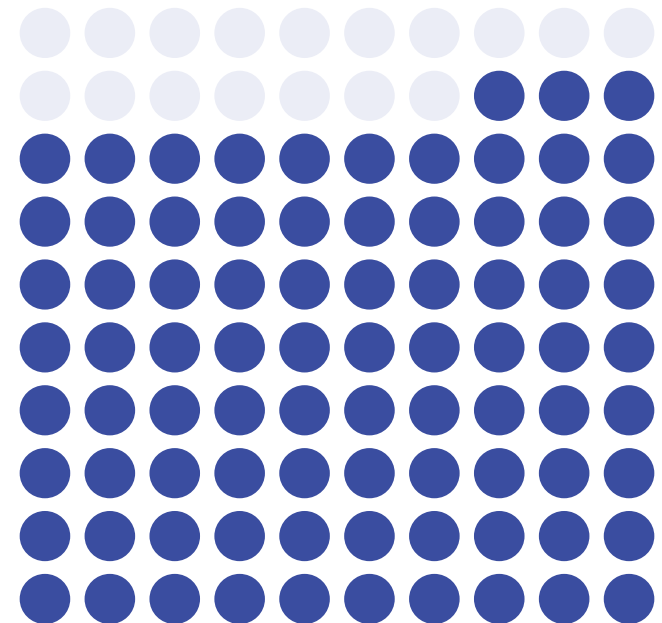
old-style, one-to-one, word-of-mouth marketing and amplifying the message through the use of social media to reach hundreds.

Why use Employee Advocacy?

Employee advocacy programs achieve remarkable success due to the level of trust buyers feel toward people they have “friended” on social media compared to brand messages. In fact, 83% of people trust recommendations from friends or family, according to the [Nielsen Group Trust Authority](#), which is more than people trust brands or paid ads.

What’s The Best Way to Achieve Employee Advocacy?

Using a native employee advocacy platform, like [GaggleAMP](#), ensures you get the most out of your advocacy initiative. When brand ambassadors have an easy-to-use tool to grow their professional brand, participation rises and they become motivated to discover, share, and measure the impact that great content has on their networks.



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What Resources Are Required?

Of course, the amount of required resources depends on a variety of circumstances, such as how often you post, the quality of the posts, how much original vs. third-party content you use, the number of ambassadors, and more. You should expect to fill the following roles in your pilot program to achieve the right level of success, but keep in mind some people may wear multiple hats:



Executive Champion

High-level, visible, and vocal supporter.



Program Advocates

Employees who are your initial advocates and promote the program internally.



Project Manager

Identifies the right platform, creates project plans, coordinates deliverables, holds meetings, and communicates project status and updates.



Content Creator

Creates original, company, or product-centric social media content, such as infographics, testimonials, videos, and/or employee/customer success stories that adhere to the corporate brand.



Content Curator

Uses GaggleAMP to create a list of content (both original and third party) and creates captivating headlines for employee advocates' use.



Trainers

Create documentation (help and email correspondence) and training material specific to the goals of the company for the employee advocacy program.



Point of Contact

Person assigned to answer questions (may be part of the trainer's function).

Identify Pilot Participants

The people you choose to participate in your pilot program can have a huge impact on its success or failure. You should select a small group of participants based on the program's goal that you defined earlier. Always select more people than you actually need. For example, if you choose 30 people who say they'll join, about 20 of them will actually do it, and about 15 will be active participants. But who should you select?

In every organization, there are three segments of employees as it relates to your advocacy program.

1. Employees who already share on social media.
2. Employees who want to share and promote initiatives but don't know how.
3. Employees who don't want to share.

The employees who already share on social media, and the employees who want to share but don't know how, will be the focus of your pilot program and will be the first to share content and promote initiatives



you suggest to them. Employees who are already sharing branded or company content require the least amount of guidance out of the three segments.

The employees who want to help you but don't know how will give you the biggest boost in your engagement numbers. They make up the largest percentage of your employee population and you'll get the most out of your program through giving them some guidance. It's important to include some of these employees in your pilot stage as well, but your focus to start should be on the employees already sharing.

Departments like Marketing and Sales often already use social media for work-related content because of their high interaction with clients and customers. Those who already advocate for the company on social media and engage with clients online are the most logical choices. Identifying participants with a large social media presence who are comfortable using Facebook, LinkedIn, and other social media platforms, are more likely to participate.



Set-up Training and Support

Your advocates will be placed into a group in GaggleAMP called a Gaggle. These are the people who flock together in spreading your message. Throughout the lifetime of your Gaggle, there are multiple emails that should be sent to employees, starting with an invitation for participation for selected participants.

Invitation – The first email you send out to drive Gaggle membership is very important. When you send out an invitation to participate in the launch, include information about what GaggleAMP is, why they have been selected, and when it's going to start. Make sure to stress how easy it is to use (scheduling should take less than five minutes per week) and that participants will be provided with all the necessary tools, including a point of contact, to help answer any questions.

Letting employees know what's in it for them is crucial in the invite. Explain how they will personally benefit by building their digital brands, establishing thought leadership, growing their networks, and increasing their followers. Providing this information helps

drive high member activity and engagement. It also reassures employees that they are always in complete control of what they share and help is just a phone call away.

Social Media Policy and Guidelines – Often, both employees and managers are worried about sending out a message that they can't take back. That's why it is important to put a social media policy with guidelines in place. This not only protects your company's reputation but helps drive employee engagement. When employees clearly understand what they can and cannot post, they feel more confident to participate and share company-related content.

Virtual Training – Hosting webinar training for your ambassadors is a great way to kick start your Gaggle pilot. When sending out an invitation for training, include when/where the training is being held, why it is important to join the session, and a link. Mention that a recording will be made available and keep the sessions short, no longer than 15 - 20 minutes. Include

a point of contact in the webinar so ambassadors know who to call if they have any questions.

Continuing to send emails throughout the lifetime of your Gaggle pilot is the best way to encourage engagement and grow your Gaggle membership.

Onsite Training – Offer in person training to departments and groups of people who need it. Show them how employee advocacy works from the user’s perspective and why it benefits employees. Explain how it boosts their personal brand, helps them build connections, allows them to earn credibility in their industry, gives them a platform to share knowledge, and gives them a better understanding of their organization.

As part of your training, it’s always helpful to have a social media refresher to make sure people have profiles set up properly to match the impression they want to convey to their target audience.



Curate Content

The content you create should be for your employees, not for the brand.

The beauty of employee advocacy is it creates [authentic engagements](#). Buyers connect with and trust people they know rather than the brand itself.

Don't destroy the credibility and trustworthiness of employee generated content with suggestive marketing copy and salesy advertising designed to only push the products and the company. Both ambassadors and potential customers will see right through it. Instead, find out the type of information your ambassadors really care about and what they want to share. If you're unsure, just ask them or send out a survey.

It's important to create a clear content strategy both the company and the employee can stand behind. When creating your strategy, consider:

- ☑ How often will the content be shared?
- ☑ How much original vs. third-party content will you use?
- ☑ Will you use images and videos? If so, what do these need to look like?
- ☑ Will content be customized for different business groups?
- ☑ How should participants suggest content?
- ☑ Will you organize content by categories?
- ☑ Will you curate content manually or take advantage of an integrated service like Scoop.it?

Curated content should make it easy for ambassadors to share relevant subject matter. Some ideas for categories include:

- ☒ Product, industry news and trends
- ☒ Marketing
- ☒ Employee recruitment
- ☒ Corporate social responsibility (csr) events
- ☒ Press releases
- ☒ New product information
- ☒ Thought leadership pieces or company culture updates

During the pilot phase, you will probably want to limit the number of categories you use. Additional categories can always be added as other business units join the pilot or when you go live. Remember, content is designed for the employees, not the company, so they should have input on what type of information they want to post. Measure the performance and ask for feedback often.

Preparing to Launch

Now that you have all the pieces of the puzzle in place, you are finally ready to launch your pilot program.

Here are some things to consider:



Set a Date – Don't pencil it in. Pick a launch date, pen it in, and stick with it. No excuses. This should not be a moving target.



Work With Your Customer Success Manager – You want to map out your kickoff strategy. Work with your Customer Success Manager on how you will go about this and have your Gaggle Launch Manager educate employees on a call by demoing the tool.



Initial Invitation – Have the appropriate executive (CEO, department VP, etc.) send out the initial invite. This can be the same higher-ups chosen as executive champions or someone else. The end result is to have







someone with authority back the program from the onset. If you can align your launch date with a large company event, such as a sales kickoff meeting for example, that works even better to give employees a practical use case to get started on the program.



Get Managers on the Platform – Success is driven from the top down. Make sure managers for each department are using the platform. Don't be afraid to ask if executives and managers need additional training on how to use social media. Not everybody has the same level of expertise and a little training can go a long way on your employees adoption of the program.

Measure Your Program's KPIs

You've heard it before. You can't manage what you don't measure. Measuring your pilot advocacy program results against your outlined objectives and business KPIs is invaluable information. At the very least, you should measure how many people you have reached through your advocacy program, the level of engagement, the number of shared posts, how many new visitors your website received through employee advocacy, and which posts received the most "likes" and "comments".

All Member Activities										
Started On	Creator Name	Message Text		Points	Expires	Posted	Refused	Reach	Clicks	Actions
Apr 22	Ramin Edmond	 It's an interesting experiment. In this format, you're unable to tell if someone else's post received 3 likes or 3,000 likes. Is that a big deal? Do you like this new setup or do you want to keep it the way it is? http://gag.gl/NYr61G		5	Expired	4	1	4,475	8	
Apr 18	Ramin Edmond	 "One of the most common challenges for launching or ramping up a social media employee advocacy program is finding enough suitable content." http://gag.gl/mDMvGs		5	Expired	4	1	4,474	7	

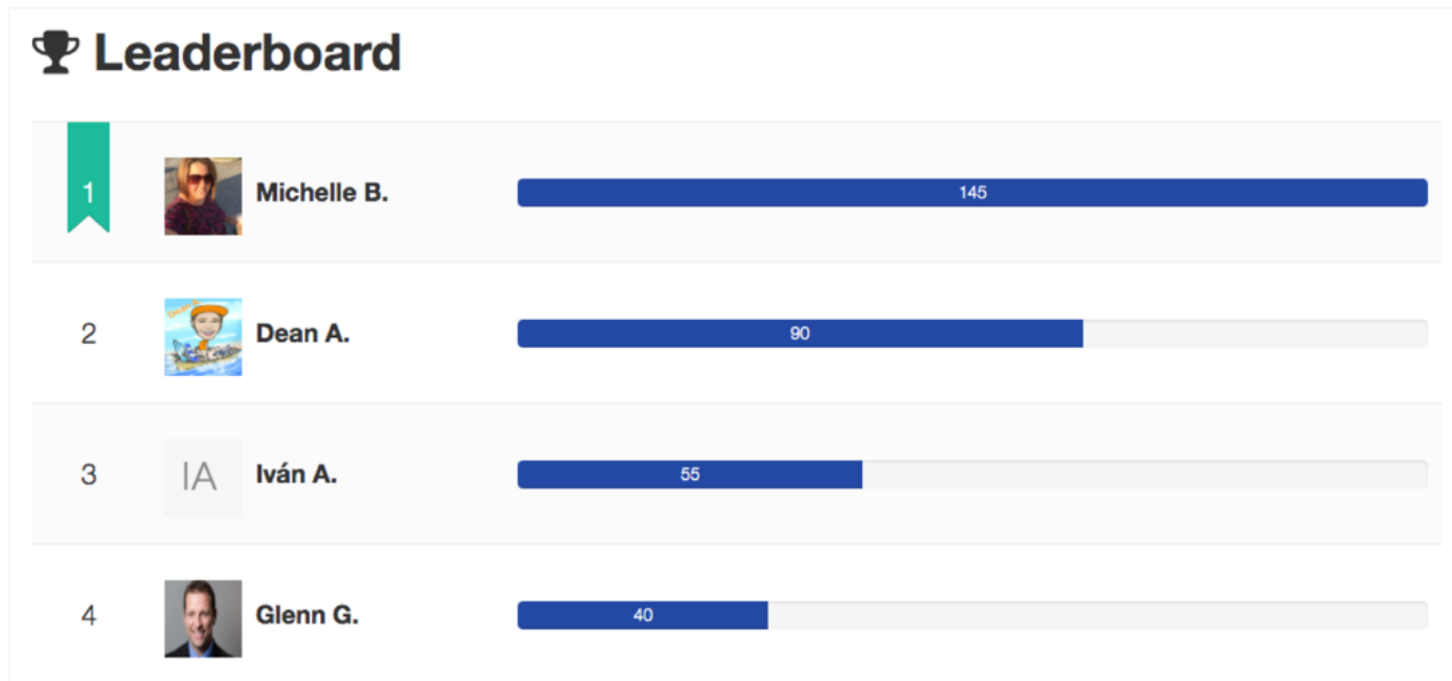
Using an employee advocacy platform, like GaggleAMP, allows you to get the most out of your advocacy initiative by quickly and easily measuring the impact sharing curated content has had on your networks.

As a Gaggle Manager, you don't want to just load up the tool with content and posts for employees to share and promote. You want to encourage and acknowledge your employees for helping your program succeed. How do you do this? Gamification!

Motivate Employees Through Gamification

Giving your employees praise, incentives, and rewards for being part of your employee advocacy program is important for long term motivation, and is quite easy to do with GaggleAMP.

With GaggleAMP, you can assign points to each activity you request from your employees. For each activity they take action on, they'll earn the assigned points. The Gaggle Manager can't see what activities individual employees carry out, but they can see how many points each employee earns.



Managers and members will also see who has earned the most points with the scoreboard. Here, everyone can quickly see how far off they are from certain goals and milestones, and what rewards they are inline to receive.

Gaggle Managers can assign rewards for employees to earn based off point totals. That part is really up to you. Some Gaggle Managers opt to give out company branded swag like shirts, bags, or mugs, whereas others offer lunch with the CEO, extra vacation days, reserved parking spots, and more. Monetary rewards are also popular and motivate everyone. You can opt to give rewards out quarterly, annually, or both.

Success Through Employee Advocacy

There's no doubt that in today's digital world the most common and effective channel for employee advocacy is through social media. When you initiate a social media employee advocacy program in your company, you essentially enable each employee to directly impact the company's success by promoting its products and services.

The process can be simple, but the results can be amazing. Make the program as successful as possible by implementing a pilot program to see what works and what doesn't. Then tweak and dive right in.



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