



Employee Advocacy 2.0

Are you geared up to the new normal?



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Introduction

Social media networks are becoming 'nerve centers' for driving a host of business (yes, not solely personal) use cases—from driving lasting connections with leads to generating positive word-of-mouth publicity for the company, employees are emerging as the lifeblood of a company's advocacy program.

This makes sense. Instead of investing in third-party influencers, why not look within and rope in your in-house employees to flex their (social media) muscle and promote the brand they love to work for? The benefits of activating your employees for social media advocacy are aplenty. Here's what the research tells us:

**87.2%**

Percentage of employees who attribute employee advocacy programs to expanding their professional network.

Source: Hinge Marketing

98%

Percentage of employees who attribute employee advocacy programs to expanding their professional network.

Source: Weber Shandwick

561%

Percentage of content reach when shared by employees via social media instead of when shared by the brands official social channels.

Source: Forbes.com

8X

The intensity of content engagement, when shared by employees as opposed to when shared by brand channels.

Source: Social Media Today

Key takeaway: You could have the best crop of subject matter experts, thought leaders, and influencers in your marketing arsenal, but they all come a close second to employees who stand to gain the maximum benefits from your advocacy program and can significantly impact your bottom line.

With that context in mind, we present to you this handy eBook that'll help you understand why employee advocacy should be every company's priority and, of course, what it takes to build a killer employee advocacy program.



What is Employee Advocacy 2.0?

- Around 31% of high-growth businesses claim to have a formal employee advocacy program in place.
- Is it possible to activate your employees as marketing, sales, and recruiting assets?
- Can your employees draw attention to the workplace and expand its reach?
- Can they double up as company 'advocates,' both online and offline?

The short answer to all these questions is **yes**, and this is exactly what employee advocacy 2.0 is all about.

When you develop a well-thought-out employee advocacy program that strives not just branded content and reach, but also looks into developing thought leaders of employees ensures that your company gains long-term success, growth, and an active userbase of highly-engaged employees who are not just promoting branded content, but are part of bigger purpose of becoming thought leaders themselves.



The Path to Employee Advocacy 2.0





What role do Employee Advocates Play?

Engaged Employees...



50%

Post messages, pictures and Videos about Employees on Social.



33%

Have shared unsolicited praise or positive comments.



24%

More likely to help boost sales than uninvolved employees.

Source: Weber Shandwick



Why an 'Engaged' Employee is an Asset

Employee Advocacy broadly is the process of promoting an organization through its employees. An ideal employee advocate is someone who:

- Drives positive brand exposure and builds awareness through online and offline channels.
- Actively and voluntarily suggests a company's products/services to colleagues, friends, and family.
- Helps build employee accountability and ownership of the organization.



- Has a social media presence and knows how to use it well.
- Engages with his or her social media following regularly and has some level of influence within his network.
- Can be thought of as a credible and reliable brand ambassador for your company.
- There are various strategies that your brand can engage in. These include (but are not limited to):



A. Social Media Advocacy: This type of advocacy is basically your employees promoting your brand and demonstrating support in the form of interesting and relevant content which could include 'behind-the-scene pictures of the workplace, thought leadership blogs, and the like. The idea is to boost user reach and drive brand awareness organically using your employees individual social media channels.

B. Incentives and Recognition: Recognizing and rewarding employees by way of "employee of the month" programs, detailed posts in your company's monthly newsletter, dedicated social media posts, etc. These initiatives can boost employee engagement and motivate employees to become the brand's self-confessed brand ambassadors.

According to the Harvard Business Review:

"72% of participants rank recognition given for high performers as having a significant impact on employee engagement."



C. Swag: Considered a more old-school method of employee advocacy (but works nevertheless), this strategy entails companies giving employees free t-shirts, cups, keychains, etc., which are embossed with the company's logo. The idea is to encourage employees to use it and well, flaunt it.

D. Developing Brand Ambassadors: This is the holistic and long term approach to helping employees build their own credibility and trust in their networks while gaining engagement for branded and corporate content. This takes time to build on scale, but this is the method of building internal influencer networks and using them. Where the motivation to participate is a movement within the organisation.

It is an added skill that is imparted to the employee... remember team building, technical skills, communication skills and so on? Business Social Media skills is now heading towards becoming a mandated skill. Enter Employee Advocacy 2.0.



Benefits of Employee Advocacy

"On average, an employee advocacy program involving 1,000 active participants can generate \$1,900,000 in advertising value." *Source: Kredible*



For all intents and purposes, you can think of employee advocacy as the twin of social media marketing.

Benefits for the Employer

- **Greater trust in the employee's word.** Think about it: When it comes to consuming content, who would your target audience trust more? The company's official social media page or its employees? Our bet is on the latter, with even research adding credibility to this fact:

"76% of individuals surveyed say that they're more likely to trust content shared by "normal" people than content shared by brands." *Source: Adweek*

Even if you did hit the right note with good content – insightful, well-written, and non narcissistic – it works far better if someone else puts in a word for you. Plus, a LinkedIn report suggests that employees can drive a 30% (Source LinkedIn) increase in the shared content's overall likes, shares, and comments.



● Ability to expand reach and awareness:

"88% of companies with over 100 employees use Twitter for marketing activities."

Source: Statusbrew

Further research claims that over half of the world's population are active on some type of social media. Your brand can expand its reach by leveraging each employee's individual network and grow exponentially.



- **Increased Employee participation:** The importance of establishing a 'formal' employee advocacy program cannot be stated enough. Research indicates that *"58.8% of employees in a formal employee advocacy program spend more than five hours per week on social media for business use."* Plus, *"79% of firms reported more online visibility after the implementation of a formal employee advocacy program. 65% reported increased brand recognition,"* as per data by Hinge Marketing.
- **Enhanced lead conversion:** For brands looking to boost their lead conversion rates, employee advocacy can lend a helping hand. As per data, *"Leads developed through employee social marketing convert 7x more frequently than other leads."* Source: Marketing Advisory Network
- **Cost-effective alternative:** According to estimates, *"An employee advocacy program costs 1/10 of paid advertising,"* making it the smart choice for emerging and established brands alike.
- **Better Internal Communication, collaboration, and productivity:** The ability to share information in real-time and consistently can bring your team together and empower employees to perform better. Research by Gartner states that *"More informed employees outperform their peers by 77%".*



- **Organic network growth:** Tying back to the first point, data claims that Employees who participate in a holistic program grow their social networks and generate additional engagement and influence for their social media presence.
- **Ability to keep track of industry trends:** According to Hinge Marketing, "76% of respondents believe that employee advocacy helped them keep up with industry trends."
- **Increased job satisfaction:** Interestingly, around "47% of referral hires have greater job satisfaction and stay longer at companies." *Source: Jobvite*

Key takeaway: *For a more optimistic, inspired, connected, and tenured workforce, your organization needs to have its roots in a strong employee advocacy program.*





Start your Employee Advocacy Program in 6 Easy Steps

At the center of your employee advocacy program lies strategic decision-making. To help you get started, here are six key steps to keep in mind:



1. What are your Advocacy Goals?

One of the first things you need to do is to chalk out a clear plan that outlines your program goals and KPIs. Your goals could read something like:

- Enhancing organic reach.
- Boosting social media traffic and increasing blog shares.
- Reducing marketing costs.



2. What's in it for your Employees?

Most employee advocacy programs solely focus on what the company stands to gain from the program without giving much thought to how it can help the employees - a big mistake. Providing your employees with the relevant context and thought-provoking reasons to engage in actively advocating for the company can turn out to be a gamechanger.

Here are a few compelling reasons you can communicate with your employees:

- **Boost in career trajectory:** Sharing quality blogs and related industry content allows employees to be viewed as thought leaders, bolsters their credibility, and helps establish their own personal brand.
- **Added incentives:** Rewarding your top advocates with the right incentives, such as a gift card, bonus, etc., can encourage them to actively engage in promoting your brand.



- **Engaging in a fun, gamified process:** If you need to put your employee advocacy program into high-drive, try gamifying the process. How does it work? Employers apply game design elements such as competition or smart challenges into a non-gamified context to construct engagement towards a particular tool, product, or service. For instance, you can create a leaderboard and show metrics on who's getting the most impressions or engagement. People with the highest engagement can be rewarded points.

A successful employee advocacy program is one that rests on active and voluntary participants, not on ones who seem disinterested and disengaged.

3. How are you going to train your Employees?

On the whole, don't let your employees do all the guesswork and share random content, which can give rise to miscommunication and error.

In addition to this, many companies use niche employee advocacy tools, which may require special training on how the tool works, so do keep that in mind.

Not to miss out, the training on business social media use for employee is holds the key to building their networks and presence better. Where they gain, the business gains manifold as well.





4. Who is going to be your Advocacy Point-of-Contact?

It's always a good idea to appoint one or two people who will serve as the 'face' of your employee advocacy program. They can assist in addressing queries, offer suggestions, and personalize the overall experience. In terms of duties, an advocacy personnel should be able to:

- Create awareness about the program.
- Encourage employees to actively participate in the program and share content
- Facilitate the content sharing process and make it easier for people to get access to the latest content.
- Create interesting content to share.
- Address queries or take suggestions.
- Strategize on how to improve advocacy.

All in all, as an advocacy liaison, your communication game needs to be strong.



5. How will you Launch the Program?

Once everything is set, it's time to work on collecting content for your employees to share so that your launch programs create big ripples all across the social media channels. At this stage, you'll want to create a rich repository of strategically thoughtout content that's engaging and relevant.

6. What steps will you take to Ensure that the Program is Ongoing?

At the start of the program, the excitement will be buzzing. However, the real work kicks in as time fades. Eventually, your employees may stop sharing content or share it less frequently. This is where you'll need to be proactive and send reminders via email/Slack/any other communication means about the program. Remember that you can also give updates on new content to share.



Top-5 Metrics to Measure its Effectiveness

You could have the best employee advocacy program in the world, but if you're not measuring its effectiveness, you'll never know what's truly sticking and what's not.

Most marketers tend to stick to measuring the number of likes, shares, and comments, but they forget the most critical metric in an effective employee advocacy program - engagement.

What organizations need is a disciplined, scalable approach to employee advocacy programs so that you can improve their efficacy. To that end, here are the top-5 metrics to consider:

- 1. Employee Adoption:** This metric indicates if your employees are logging in to your platform to share content. The higher your adoption rate, the more engaged your employees will be. Based on the results, you can gauge the share rate, engagement, and website traffic.

How to measure it?

Employee Adoption = Total Number of Active Users (users who are logged in) compared to the Total Number of Users Invited to the Program.



2. Share Rate: This metric is considered to be the universal rate for employee advocacy. It allows you to understand what's preventing (or encouraging) your employees to participate in the employee advocacy program.

Handy tip: Creating a structured plan comprising content, gamification, training, and support is key to understanding the share rate. You may also want to understand how socially-savvy your employees are to get the best out of your program.

How to measure it?

Share Rate = Total Number of Shares by an Employee compared to the Total Active Users.

3. Potential Reach: This metric throws light on whether your social media posts are being viewed by the right target audience or not. The higher the reach, the better your users will engage and boost the conversion rates.

How to measure it?

Potential reach represents an estimate of your target audience on social media that connect with your brand each time your employees share content.



4. Click-Throughs: This metric evaluates how many people clicked on a social post shared by an employee. It allows you to measure engagement rate, website traffic, website conversion rate, and how compelling your content is. According to LinkedIn, *“Employee shares result in double the click-through-rate of corporate shares.”*

How to measure it?

Click-Through = Total Measured Clicks / Total Measured Reach x 100



5. Earned Media Value: This signifies the amount (dollars) your company spends to get the same audience to view your content through paid media. It also helps you to understand how your brand’s content is performing and what your brand’s word-of-mouth and ROI is truly worth.

How to measure it?

EMV = Total Potential Reach X Equivalent Cost Per Impressions (CPM)

Key takeaway: Measuring your employee advocacy program can help you maximize the results as well as understand how your brand (and the program itself) compares with competitors. You can use industry benchmark data to better understand where your program stands in the overall scheme of things and make an informed decision on how to tread forward.



How to Improve your Advocacy Program?

If you think your employee advocacy program is a lost cause, don't lose hope just yet. Try these pro tips and look for ways to enhance the program:



- **Drive conversations about what your employees' individual goals are for sharing content.** This small tactic allows you to understand whether your employees goals are in sync with that of your organization, get a glimpse of what your employees care about the most, and can help you decide what kind of changes to make to the program based on the input and feedback you receive.
- **Encourage employees to share more content** by making the process fun and interactive. You could gamify the process, for instance.
- **Demonstrate the benefits of engaging in the program** from the *employees* perspective to get them going. You could create short videos or mini case studies about the 'wins' and post them on your communication portal.



- **Laser-focus on making the process streamlined** and organized by making it easy for your employees to advocate. One effective way to do this is by ensuring that the information is easily accessible.
- **Send weekly friendly reminders to employees** and inform them about all the content that's available for them to share.
- **Thank your employees for participating in the program.** If your employee advocacy program is forced and borders on an "instruction-based" model, it won't last. You need to show gratitude to your employees and give them the freedom to *choose* the content they wish to share.
- **Genuinely let the power of your program rest in the hands of your employees.** This sense of enablement will drive organic engagement, and the *flexibility* encourages your employees to actively participate in the program.





Top-6 Parameters on Evaluating Employee Advocacy Tools



Using an employee advocacy platform/tool makes your work easier. It acts as a centralized location for all employees and allows:

- Easy access to company content and news, third-party content, and an employee's personal content
- Seamless sharing and creation of content through social networks platforms
- Employees to tag colleagues, comment, and "like" posts

If you're wondering about what kind of an employee advocacy tool to go for, here's a quick checklist of the required parameters:

Content Variation: It should allow for seamless distribution of diverse forms of content such as company content, user-generated content (UGC), third-party content, and customized employee content based on their area of interest.



Web and Mobile-Friendliness: Your employees should be able to share content on-the-go, and at any time they wish. Needless to say, the tool should be available for both iOS and Android versions.

Multiple Social Networks: The tool should allow your employees to share content on multiple social networks simultaneously. Plus, it should empower your employees to engage with the company's social posts by being able to directly like, share, or post on the content.

Channel specific content configuration: Face it, each social media channel has it's own nuances. Does the tool allow you to customise how the content is shared in each network? For example: LinkedIn loves long format status posts. Are you able to pre-populate long form status text which the employees can customise before sharing?

Reporting and Analytics: It should provide in-depth detailed analytics on key metrics such as employee sign-up, share rate, number of comments and reactions, time in the platform, number of clicks driven, clicks per share, any conversions attributed to social employee shares, etc.

Simplified User Experience: It should offer a simple and easy-to-use user interface, an organized dashboard, simplified navigation, and a single-click sign up process.



Key takeaway: It is highly recommended that you choose an employee advocacy tool that naturally blends into the workday instead of seeming like 'more work' for the employee. If it's not easy, convenient, and simple to use; your program will fail before it even takes off.



Top-3 Real-Life Brands that prove Employee Advocacy Works

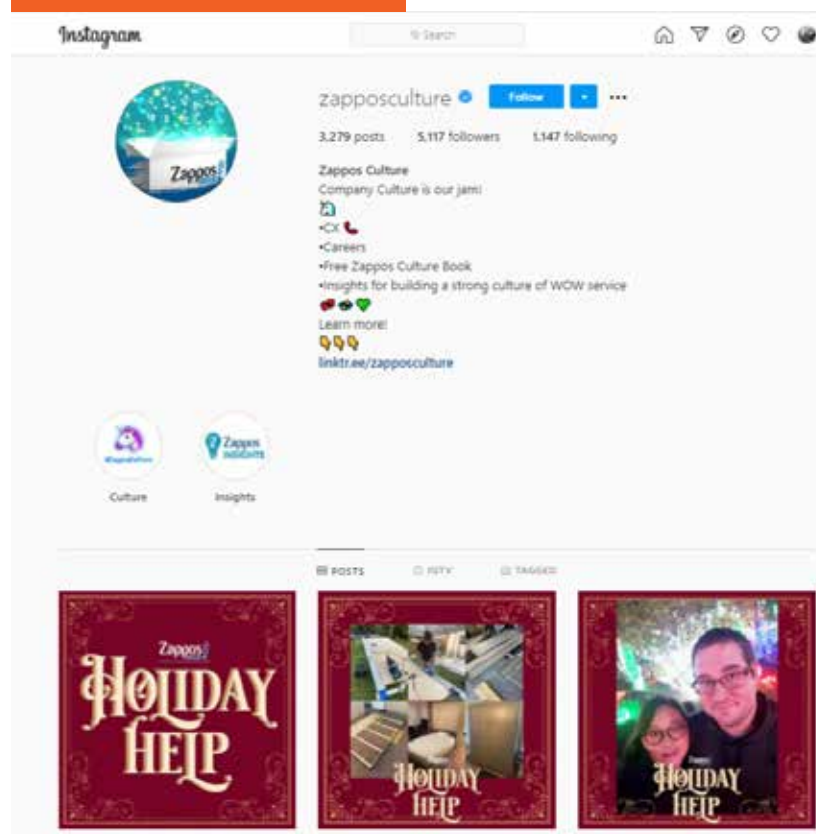
The following three brands are taking their employee advocacy program rather seriously. Here's what they're doing right:

1. Zappos: Integrated Employee Advocacy within the Business Plan, Early On.

Zappos played a masterstroke by integrating their employee advocacy program within the business plan when it was established way back in 1999. From the very beginning, the company focused on creating an 'employee-centric' culture. According to the founder, Tony Hsieh:

"If you get the culture right, most of the other stuff, like delivering great customer service or building a long-term enduring brand or business, will just be a natural byproduct."

Take a look at its employee-led de facto ad channels: "ZapposCulture" and "InsideZappos" which demonstrate how happy and excited employees are to be working with Zappos. An inclusive, nurturing culture can clearly be seen across these platforms:





The brand's Twitter page too focuses on celebrating the company's core assets - its employees - who are naturally motivated enough to 'return the favour' and promote the brand they genuinely love working with:



The use of employee-centric hashtags such as #zapponians promotes a sense of culture and belonging in the team.



2. ANZ Bank: Leveraged 'LinkedIn Elevate' to forge stronger Customer Relationships and help Employees build Professional Brands.

ANZ Bank, being more formal in nature, went a different route: It empowered its employees with an easy-to-use content sharing platform - LinkedIn Elevate. The idea was to showcase the Bank's thought leadership in addition to allowing the bank's advisors to be seen in a more 'credible' light.

The Results:

6X

Boost in frequency of content sharing by employees.

4x

More Company Page followers.

4x

Faster employee connection growth.

2.3%

Engagement rate on employee-shared content.





3. Dell - Enabled Employees to share Content that reflected the latter's true Interests.

Most companies make use of employee advocacy to promote the brand endlessly and aggressively. Dell took the road not taken. It launched a 4-hour social media training program for the employees, upon the completion of which participants got the following certificate:



The brand *specifically* instructed its employees to share only about 20% of Dell-related content and refreshingly advised them to share tech and industry news for the remaining 80%, which could demonstrate the dealer's authoritativeness and expertise. In the end, it was all about discovering, curating, and sharing interesting content.

The Results:

150,000

Pieces of content shared to an audience of 1.2 million people.

45,000

Clicks driven to the brand's website.

"We have some really dedicated, fantastic employees who love working for Dell. We wanted to harness that energy and that excitement and to help our employees share as much information as they wanted, as easily as possible." – Amy Heiss, Marketing Director for Social Media



Wrapping Up

“Employee advocacy 2.0 is an “always up” marketing channel that drives more web traffic and more leads. Also, brands can increase content engagement by up to 700x and brand awareness by up to 24x with employee advocacy.”



Your sales and marketing executives are only one part of an ever-evolving advocacy equation. And try as much as brands may, they cannot effectively engage with real people without boring or annoying them out.

At the end of the day, people wish to engage with real people, not inanimate brands. Contrary to popular opinion, employee advocacy is not about employees promoting their companies; it's about companies:

- Looking at fun, interesting, and strategic ways to promote their biggest asset - their employees.
- Empowering employees to build their own personal brand.
- Building a more collaborative, participative, and inclusive 'employee-centric' culture, which in turn can promote company goodwill and reinforce the brand's image as well as positioning.
- Integrating advocacy into the very fabric of the company's culture instead of driving it as a one-off, isolated program.



Socxo is an Employee Advocacy 2.0 ready solution. To find out more:

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