



# How to Drive Adoption for Your Employee Advocacy Program



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# Introduction

In marketing, social media plays a critical role in the buyer's journey, especially for most B2B products and services. It takes a collective effort to engage buyers, which is why utilizing the social networks of employees is an essential component of a B2B marketing strategy. However, someone needs to ensure employees share the right content, on the right social networks, at the right time. This is known as employee advocacy.

With our experience in implementing numerous employee advocacy programs, we've compiled a guide which includes proven best practices to encourage employees to share company content on their personal social media. In the following pages, we will share common best practices, frequently asked questions, and roadblocks during implementation that hinder adoption.

This eBook will help you understand the necessary steps it takes to start a successful employee advocacy program. After reading this eBook, you'll learn how to:

- Enable the adoption of an employee advocacy program
- Encourage active participation among your employees
- Ensure social sharing is simple and accessible

# What is Employee Advocacy and Why Does It Matter Today?

## What Is Employee Advocacy?

Many organizations understand the benefits an employee advocacy program can deliver. Current consumer behaviors are changing fast, and most companies are struggling to keep up.

Recent statistics reflect the shift happening with today's social customer. For example, 84% of the most senior B2B buyers believe social networks play a vital role in the purchasing process. In addition to the data, anecdotal evidence indicates that B2B companies are experiencing the challenge of connecting with potential customers.

To that same degree, buyers are encountering a bit of distrust in the market, especially in industries like financial services. A recent report by [Edelman](#) has noted that trust has declined over the past several years, stating, "2018 showed six double-digit trust declines amongst the informed public segment, including a 20-point drop in the U.S."

33% of buyers trust brands, while 90% of customers actually trust the recommendations of people they know.

Today's customer is social savvy. They know when they're being advertised to. They know when they're being sold. Which is why there's a huge opportunity in employee advocacy because you're more likely to have your customers trust the recommendations from peers they know within their network. By enabling your employees to share your branded message, you're leveraging the collective networks of your employees through a more trusted channel.

**Employee advocacy helps amplify your company's content through the voice of your employees.** Your employees are a living, breathing extension of your company, and as such are your marketing team's greatest asset. It's important to engage them effectively to help amplify the content that marketing teams are creating, but also to be the face of your company. A company without people is just a bunch of stationery. So, it's important to enable your employees to share branded messages in a positive light.

## The WIIFM Factor

By answering "What's in it for me?", you're providing context for why employees should share content. If you are asking your employees to be advocates on their own social networks, it's really important that they understand why. It's also important for your employees to feel personally invested in the discussion. Leadership should always be included too because a successful employee advocacy program requires leadership buy-in.

### **What's in It for Your Company?**

There are quite a few benefits for companies that use employee advocacy programs, but the major highlight is authenticity. It helps you

humanize your brand by presenting multiple perspectives. This can be as simple as having your employees add their own expertise or provide their own context to the content that you've created when they share it. It gives a little bit more personality and increases your visibility.

### **Brand Awareness**

The reach of a brand channel is only so far, whereas the reach of your employees is exponentially larger. According to MSLGroup, messages shared by employees reached 561% further than the same message shared on a company's branded channel. Employee advocacy gives your company the chance to highlight your culture, talent, and expertise.

### **Here are several other benefits for your company:**



More Authentic  
Brand Voice



More Visibility  
Online



Highlight Culture,  
Talent & Expertise



Generate  
Inbound Leads



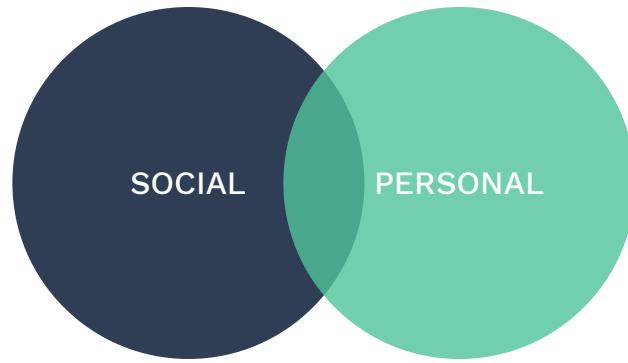
Increase Content  
Performance

It's no surprise that today, one of the challenges many companies face is a talent shortage. So, you want to make sure that you are attracting the right candidates and getting high quality talent coming in. Employee advocacy is one way that you can do that. Employee advocacy can generate inbound marketing qualified leads and improve content marketing performance. With the rise of investment into content marketing, you want to make sure that you maximize that investment by expanding your reach through your employees.

### **The Gray Area Between Professional and Personal Social Media**

Before we dive into the benefits for employees, let's discuss the gray area between professional and personal social media. This is a common concern among employees who are interested in sharing company

content but aren't sure about how to achieve the appropriate balance. Depending on your industry, there are numerous different brands that mesh what's happening between how people personally use social networks and how they use them professionally.



A few years ago, employees had a strong divide with which social profiles they wanted to use for their personal life, such as keeping up with friends and family, and which profiles were used only for professional matters. Now we're seeing a growing number of professionals with a mesh between the two. This gray area is the sweet spot for employee advocacy and for the employees themselves to figure out how to integrate their personal social media persona with their professional social media persona. The employees who are encouraged to live within the gray area can open up more opportunities in their networks from those existing relationships with the company.

## **What's in It for Your Employees?**

There's really no one-size-fits-all approach, which is why the inherent benefits are specific to different roles and functions. According to Hinge Marketing, almost 86% of employees who participate in an employee advocacy program cite the increased social presence as having a positive impact on their career. Here are additional benefits employees can gain from an advocacy program.

### **Engage with Prospects**

Employee advocacy allows employees to start conversations with potential customers. Employee advocacy is great for anyone in a sales or marketing role because it can spark conversations. It helps make outgoing cold calls a little less cold and really educate those prospects before they engage in those conversations.

### **Build Thought Leadership**

Employee advocacy also presents an opportunity for employees to showcase their expertise. Everyone wants to look like a true rockstar in their industry. They can do this by building themselves up as a subject matter expert.

Establishing a personal brand and distinguishing yourself as a thought leader is (for most industries) no longer a nice-to-have, but a need-to-have. Social advocacy programs make it easy for employees to showcase themselves as thought leaders. They will be able to access and share relevant industry content – both in-house and third-party – with one click from one curated, centralized source.

There are many examples of companies that will get their executive leadership or some of their top performing salespeople on the platform. By using employee advocacy and sharing great quality content that highlights their expertise, the employees may receive requests to speak at conferences or find other opportunities to showcase their thought leadership. This is just because they've built their influence and established themselves as thought leaders online.

### **Keep Up with Industry Trends**

Employee advocacy can also help your workforce stay up-to-date with industry trends. This is an opportunity for your employees to learn about the latest news in their industry. By centralizing all your content within an employee advocacy platform, you are then able to focus on the topics that matter most. It's also a way to start conversations with

potential customers. Through employee advocacy, your sales team can connect with decision makers on a more personal level than just sending out an email that most likely gets lost in their inbox. As a result, content can warm up conversations and help find the similarities that you might not find in just sending out a cold email.

### Benefits You Perceive as An Employee Posting About Your Company



## The Challenge with Adoption

Despite the benefits, employees might not necessarily want to be active online. Having everyone in the company adopt employee advocacy isn't always simple. Many employees do not have the genuine desire to promote the company or stand out as an expert. Employees may also have too many things on their to-do list, so it can be a challenge to get them to add one more.

According to recent research from Golfdale Consulting, while over half of managers recognize the visibility gains and brand benefits of social

advocacy, just 1 in 10 report implementing a structured, comprehensive social media advocacy program as part of their digital strategy.

In this section, we'll dive into proven best practices on how to engage your employees and drive adoption for your employee advocacy program. Employee advocacy is still relatively new for a lot of marketing leaders and because it's so new, we often hear these concerns:

- I don't have time.
- I don't want to.
- I don't know what I'm allowed to share.
- I don't want to mix my personal life and work.

These are just some of the comments that marketers will get back when they do want to engage their employees as advocates.

# Employee-First Content Strategy

One of the first tactics to confront some of those initial concerns is to make sure that if you are trying to get your staff to share content, make sure that you're positioning this content in a way that is employee-first.

Within an organization, an average of 21% of employees are estimated to be an advocate, with another 33% having high potential to be an advocate. ([Weber Shandwick & KRC Research](#))

This means that if you're thinking about promoting certain pieces of content, such as blog posts or eBooks, through your employees, you

want to make sure that you position this content as something that's valuable and interesting for them. Ultimately, for employee advocacy, your employees are your audience. They're your target market. You want to figure out how you can position this content in a way that your staff would actually find it relevant, helpful, and interesting enough for them to want to share it on their own personal networks.

A lot of brands have a distinct divide between content sharing, viewing, and creating. They have a nice mix of people who are social savvy and very active online, but also a mix of people who are not as comfortable and could use more assistance in sharing content through social media.

# Proven Methods For Driving Adoption

## 1. Social Media Guidelines and Policy

The first step is to ensure your social media policy is up to date with current workplace standards. Several years ago, social media usage at work was seen as unproductive and it was even blocked on many company devices.

The taboo of social media is still present in some workplaces, so it's really important for you to make sure that your social media policy is updated and aligns with your company's current stance on social media. This will ensure your policy and guidelines are much more friendly towards social sharing.

Here are several tips for refreshing your social media policy. First, you want to figure out how social media fits into your company vision and determine what role you want it to play. This will be reflected in your social media policy. You want it to be clear about why you feel that social media is important for your business and why you believe it's going to drive results.

You'll also want to make sure that you provide guardrails for your employees. Outline how they should use social media, the do's and the don'ts. Provide best practices so that they have a sense of what they could be doing when they're sharing on social media. This is especially the case for industries where compliance is very important, such as financial services, legal, and management consulting. You want to provide these organizations with guardrails, so employees feel empowered to still be active on social media, yet they're aware of what they are and aren't allowed to talk about.

You also want to make sure you convey the brand voice. This is to ensure your employees have guidelines on certain things they can speak about as a brand. It also helps ensure employees remain on-brand and refrain from sharing content that isn't approved.

For good measure, you want to make sure that you relay this information to your team, so they understand how they can channel the brand voice.

## 2. Identify Social Champions

Sharing on social media isn't for everyone. In most organizations, there are going to be team members that don't necessarily feel comfortable with social media, which is completely acceptable. Successful employee advocacy programs depend on who you want to do the work. They are the team members who are already active on social

media and are the movers and the shakers. By starting off with this group of active employees, you can build excitement for your brand.

First, you need to identify your internal social champions. Here's a few ways you can do that.

- You can survey your team to see who is interested in being active in a program like this and who would actually want to share on their social networks.
- You can ask managers to identify top-performing employees.
- You might also want to watch your social channels to see which employees are already re-sharing the content from your brand.
- Do a social media audit of your staff to identify who currently has a very strong social media profile and following, because these are the people who will likely see the benefit of employee advocacy.

You don't have to win everyone over, but you want to make sure that it is easy for those who are already active on social and are excited about it. Make it easy for them to champion for your brand.

### **3. Leadership Involvement**

Over the past five years, we've helped numerous organizations implement employee advocacy programs. During this time, we've discovered a single, undeniable truth that reveals why some organizations achieve a level of success far superior to others. This truth – or employee advocacy best practice – is to involve leadership. Plain and simple. Employee advocacy programs that are fully supported by executive leadership are far more successful than those where leadership is not fully on board. Leaders who embrace this

opportunity provide their organization with a way to come out ahead and secure a real, sustainable, competitive advantage.

While it seems simple enough, marketing professionals know all too well the many demands placed on leadership. Now this is twofold. You want to make sure that your executives have made it clear for their employees that this is a priority for the business and that this is something that deserves their attention. The second part of equation is to ensure it is actually beneficial to the executives themselves. They're the thought leaders who the media contacts for opinions and who show up in the top Google results about your company. You want to make sure that they look like true thought leaders, not just in the company, but also in the industry.

Leadership involvement also conveys to your staff that social media is a priority for the business. Here are a few ways you can engage your executives:

- Offer social media training to ensure they know how to use it, see the value of it, and understand best practices for each different network.
- Make it easy to share and advocate for your organization through a centralized content library.

Executives are busy, often traveling or overscheduled, so ensuring social media sharing is as easy as possible is critical for ensuring leadership adoption. Finally, you want to make sure that they have the tools they need to communicate their social media plan back to their team. Offer resources like social media 101 guides or even a talk track to use when they are speaking with their teams. Encourage them to talk about social media at meetings and events just to again iterate on the importance it has for the business.

## 4. Addressing the Age Gap Between Employees

According to Deloitte, millennials will make up 75% of the global workforce by 2025. With Generation Z also entering the workforce, they're bringing an unprecedented level of technology skills. In contrast, baby boomers have a much harder time adjusting to modern technology. Although technology often doesn't come naturally to the older demographics, this doesn't mean they're necessarily disconnected from social media altogether.

Facebook usage among the 30-to-49 age group has increased by 8% since 2011, and usage in the 50-to-64 age group has increased by 18% in the same time frame.

- *Gallup*

Successful employee advocacy programs address the age gap among employees. For millennials who have social media ingrained within their daily lives, it's important that they understand how to use it in a professional manner. It's not just about selfies and pictures of food on Instagram; it's important for them to also understand the benefits of using it in a professional context and how it can help them with their career growth.

Older generations are not as used to social media as millennials. This generation typically uses social media for a more professional context. It's important to help them understand how they can weave in some of those more personal posts if they want to, showing personality and character and understanding the benefits that social media can have in their day-to-day roles and responsibilities.

## 5. Social Media Training

Start on social media training. You want to make sure you offer social media training in a way that will help employees absorb the information as easily as possible.

We personally recommend offering an in-person social media training because you'll have the most attention and fewest distractions. They team will be in the same room, focusing on absorbing that information. It's also helpful for you to be able to answer their questions live.

Webinars are a good option if your team is remote and scattered across the globe. Webinars still have that live engagement, but you don't necessarily have to all be in the same room at the same time.

Some other ways that you can reinforce this training is through email campaigns. Create a drip campaign with digestible, bite-sized pieces of information on social media. Posters are also effective. If you have posters up in your break room or in the washroom, people will read them. Some of our customers who have used posters around the office have had significantly higher adoption of employee advocacy programs. People sometimes need that visual reminder.

In addition, create an overview of the different social networks and some examples of what employees might want to post there. This is something that will be available after this Webinar as well, as a resource that you can share with your team. Educate your team on why and how you use these different networks.

### **Provide employee recognition**

Show appreciation for the individuals who have been very active on social media and engaging with your brand's content by highlighting them in meetings or through your company's internal newsletters.

Recognition goes a long way in reinforcing those behaviors that you want to see and encouraging other staff members to do the same.

### **Internal Marketing**

Another proven tactic is to promote this program internally in a way that's fun for your team. For example, one customer branded their program The Share Station, presenting employee advocacy as a fun program and something that people are interested in. As a result, employees don't feel like it is an additional ask; it's a fun way for them to get involved. Definitely keep that in mind as you think about your advocacy program and how you can internally market the program differently and creatively.

### **Email Updates**

Email updates are a great way to circulate content that you would like your employees to share on their social networks, and it's a good way to ensure employee advocacy is top-of-mind.

### **Gamification**

Making employee advocacy fun and rewarding is another strategy to ensure usage rates continue to drive positive benefits for the business. Gamification encourages participation and friendly competition.

The PostBeyond platform has a leaderboard that allows users to track their performance compared to other platform users. This leaderboard makes it easy for users see their overall performance. When tied to a reward program, it pushes employees to hit their sharing goals and drives overall employee advocacy performance.

# Key Takeaways

When you're thinking about the types of content that would be appropriate for your employees to share on their social networks, think about what would be valuable for them. What would they find interesting and what would their networks find interesting? The best way to drive adoption for your employee advocacy program is **to make sure that your staff are truly engaged and able to add their own voice** to anything that they're sharing on behalf of the company.

Their support really adds to the credibility and authenticity. You want to make sure that the content you're distributing for your staff is something that they can truly support and would authentically want to engage with.

You also want to make social media advocacy easy, accessible, and compelling. So, figure out how you can make this process easy for staff to obtain and share this content. Social media in the workplace is still a relatively new phenomenon, so you want to make sure that you have open dialogue with staff, so you keep communicating what your expectations are and encourage the behaviors you want to see.

Learn how PostBeyond can help modernize communications at your organization by [requesting a demo](#).

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