



GETTING STARTED WITH EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY





Your employee advocates are essential pieces to the marketing puzzle, and they should also be at the center of your brand's marketing strategy. For many brands, the full potential of their advocates has yet to be reached, and for others, their advocacy program has yet to come to fruition. Future years will further be defined by social media and content marketing, and without your advocates, your brand's efforts can suffer in engagement and reach.

Before you begin to craft an employee advocacy program, it's important to have a fully defined concept of what an employee advocate actually is, what they do, and their potential as marketers. These answers will in turn help you answer the question, 'Why do you need them?'

What is Employee Advocacy?

Employee advocacy refers to employees who actively promote your brand, company, or organization. It's the phenomenon by which an employee advocates on behalf of your company – and in today's modern world of content marketing, much of that impact can be felt in social media.

–Your advocates are able to reach users that may otherwise not have been connected to your company.–

Through the utilization of their own personal networks, your advocates are able to reach users that may otherwise not have been connected to your company. Over the years, users on social media have become attuned to big brand marketing tactics, pushing these users to seek more authentic relationships with the brands they invest in. Thus, the popularity of employee advocates has risen, as they are viewed as more trustworthy than the companies themselves.

Your employee advocates have a lot to bring to the table, and their ability to impact your engagements on social media and beyond cannot be understated. By getting your employees to share your content, you unlock the full power of their collective network. The more advocates you have sharing across their networks, the higher the potential to connect your brand with relevant prospects.



Case Study: Informatica Powerfully Equips Employees via GaggleAMP

GaggleAMP has enabled Informatica to leverage the collective networks of their employees to expand audience reach. As of October 2016, Informatica has activated over 700 global employees using GaggleAMP, over 20% of the company. Employees quickly embraced the tool, which made social sharing as simple as a click of a mouse. The platform is so intuitive that very little enablement was needed for onboarding.

Informatica has also seen how GaggleAMP helps different departments feel more involved in the company's marketing efforts. As a result of the deployment, employees from HR, R&D, Sales and Finance now actively contribute to the corporate marketing effort. By allowing internal brand champions to easily share their expertise, GaggleAMP has helped Informatica increase employee morale while reaching a broader global audience.



How Employee Advocacy Works

We've all heard the benefits of advocacy touted by big brands and small businesses alike, but how does advocacy work for your company? Your employee advocates can achieve much more than your company alone could do on its own in regards to social media and digital marketing. In fact, employee advocacy pivots on the idea that employees carry with them a new network of users who they can reach on a more personable level.

Your company may boast a network of followers that far surpasses any given employee's network in terms of quantity, but your employees have the ability to extend your brand awareness beyond your immediate social reach, touching users who may have been attainable only through said employees.

Why It Works: An Infographic

--When employee advocates share your content, they're putting your brand in front of their immediate network of users; that's brand awareness.--

The best part about employee advocacy and brand awareness is that if your content is engaging, it's going to compound its potential for showing up on more user's timelines and homepages because more people are clicking on your content. This can quickly snowball into an exponential increase in how many users get to see your content and, thus, how much brand awareness you're getting through your employee advocates.

--Your advocates are viewed as more authentic and trustworthy sources of information than your company.--

Users are more likely to engage with content pushed through an advocate than content presented directly through the company, and it's not always because the content itself is engaging but rather because the mode of transportation for that content is perceived as a more trustworthy source. The sheer fact that you are a company may place you in a mental category of 'unimportant'.



Employee advocacy also works by **extending the life of your post**. They have anti-aging effects as well as the ability to resurrect dead posts simply by engaging their networks and utilizing your content as a springboard for their stories. For instance, 73.8% of potential engagements on any given social media posts happen within the first hour. Employees can take that post and share it over time and in a multitude of ways, extending the lifespan of that post and therefore resurrecting that post multiple times. These leveraged posts see an average lifespan increase of 4,200%.

Recruitment: It Takes a Team to Make it Work

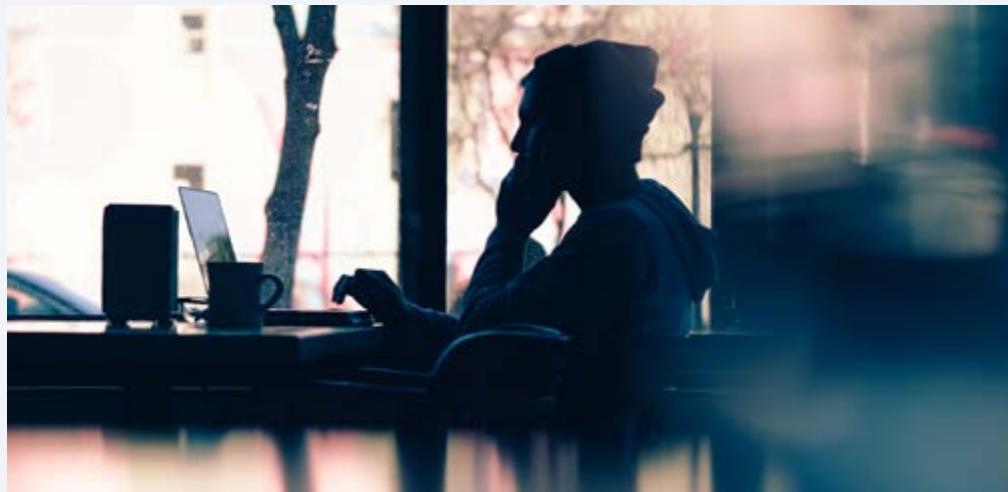
Jumping on the employee advocacy bandwagon might sound like an easy sell, but your **company's culture** can affect the efficacy of your efforts. The environment that hosts any growing or changing population can either hinder or enhance the results of said growth. The same goes for employee advocacy programs and the company culture they reside within.

The most direct approach is to ask your managers. They likely know their colleagues well enough to identify who is already sharing about the company on social media. A great place to start with this approach is the sales department. Go-getters in sales are already posting to LinkedIn about your company to create new sales referrals.

Once, you've found your current supporters, you can leverage them recruit other ambassadors. These existing ambassadors are influencers. They have taken the initiative and are your early adopters. Their leadership and passion can help recruit advocates in a more organic way.

Beyond recruiting new internal advocates, your early ambassadors can help guide your engagement strategy moving forward. Bring them together and see how they have been sharing without being part of a formal program. See what content they share and take notice of the voice they use. This can cut out a lot of guess-work in the beginning and help your messages hit their target more effectively.

You have current social advocates within your company whether you know it or not. Identifying them and leveraging them to recruit and guide your engagement strategy will help your program get off the ground more quickly.



Facebook's new algorithm may hide company posts, making your advocates now more important than ever in transmitting your message!

In fact, the increase in content and the resulting increase in filtering now limits the reach of company posts. While you may show up in some feeds, other users might never even get the opportunity to see your post in the first place. Employees have personal profiles and thus tend to show up more often on feeds, tapping into the feeds of users that may be unreachable for your company. This means that not only are you gaining brand awareness through the utilization of your employee's social networks, but you're also more likely to garner user engagement with your content in addition to simply increasing awareness.



Onboarding Your CEO

In order to ensure that company culture is conducive to employee engagement, secure that leaders within the company are on board with the program before you start. It's of the utmost importance to first get **C-level employees**, leaders, and managers on board with social media because they can drastically affect the conduciveness of your efforts to acquire employee advocates. Even more so, their support can boost the employee advocacy program as a whole.

--CEOs have the unique ability to turn the tides without directly participating in many company ongoings, and their perceptions can filter through the ranks and impact employees down the line as well.--

In order to get your C-level employees on board with employee engagement, you'll need to explain advocacy in terms that are pertinent to their position. For instance, CEOs aren't necessarily concerned with the finer details of engagement; rather, be concise in your explanation, and focus on the results. CEOs are focused on the results, and they entrust their management teams whom they've hired to get those results.

Onboarding Your Employees

Defining engagement to your employees can be simply ineffective if your goal is to get employees engaged. It's important to relate to your employees exactly how they could be impacted by participating in your program. Show them the individual benefits they will experience. Thought leadership status and personal brand enhancement are just a few. It's important to also present how the company as a whole will benefit from their contributions. Share with them the marketing, sales, HR and other gains the company will experience from their participation.

Motivate your employees to use Gaggles by fostering the development of advocates from engagements.

In order to onboard your employees, you need to foster the growth of your company's view on employee participation in other areas. Allow self expression (within boundaries, of course), provide meaningful work, show your appreciation, include them in your marketing efforts, and provide consistent feedback. Building a highly-engaged workforce takes consistent effort and delegated time.



What Type of Content is Most Shareable?

An engaged workforce is more likely to share your content, but the efficacy of these efforts will pivot on your ability to create shareable content in the first place. Many times, employees value the networks they've created on social media and can find it difficult to share sales posts on a constant basis, knowing that they'll likely lose their hard-earned following. Make it easy for your employees to share posts by making your posts more shareable.

Utilize photos, post infographics, and choose from a wide variety of topic sources in order to make your employees actually want to share your posts. Company content is important but variety is even more important. Too many company and product oriented posts will drive away your advocates and their respective networks.

--The most shareable content is content that is highly engaging.--

Part of understanding shareable content is also understanding what content provides value on the given social network. For example, the charity work your company does would be great for Facebook. Specifications on a new product are more suited for LinkedIn or even Twitter. Be conscious of the types of connections your advocates have on the respective networks and craft your posts accordingly. On top of that, be conscious of the different groups you have within your advocates. Employees in one business unit may not want the same content as employees in another. Segmenting your content among your different internal groups will further ensure that the right advocates and getting the most relevant content to them and their networks. This, in turn, will lead to higher participation and longer engagement.



Getting Started: Checklist

Fueled by purpose and powered by passion are your employee advocates, but funneling that passion and purpose into useable action is the key to an effective advocacy program. Onboarding is just as important as retention, so follow this checklist in order to craft an effective advocacy campaign:

- **Develop goals and key performance indicators (KPIs)** - Breakdown your goals for the program as well as KPIs, as these are what will help focus your efforts and drive your successes. They'll also be useful when analyzing and tracking your advocates and their interactions on social media.
- **Craft 'professionally personal' accounts with your employees** - Many, if not most, of your employees likely already have their own personal accounts, but a separate personal account should also be created (unless they're willing to keep their existing personal account operating within company policy) for professional use.
- **Train your advocates** - Hold a training session to ensure that everyone is aware of the policies, the 'do's and don't's', and the goals of employee advocacy. During this time, you can help them create accounts while training them on company policies and how to address a myriad of situations. Foster a sense of freedom on social media (while operating within company policy), as this helps your advocates come across as more personable and authentic. This is also the time to get them familiar with GaggleAMP and how to share content with their Gaggles.



What to Expect: Roadblocks, Re-engagement, and Remedies

As with anything, there's likely to be some stumbles along the route to success. One of the biggest roadblocks to advocacy and engagement is the fact that, over time, employees are likely to disengage, especially if the company isn't overly involved with the process after the initial setup.

As a proactive measure, hold ongoing classes for your advocates to answer questions and keep them up-to-date on company policies as well as information pertinent to social media. This ensures that they're constantly supported by the company during their time as an advocate.

If you're finding that employees are beginning to disengage from the process, then you'll need to take action immediately to address and remedy the situation. Refresher courses are a great time to review advocacy goals for each employee, but it's also a time where the company can re-establish the relationship with said employee. Because advocacy is fueled by engagement, you'll want to address the core motivators at hand. Review what it takes to onboard your employees, and try to pinpoint where the disconnect may be forming. In this manner, your company can address the wedge and remove it from the process.

Employee Advocacy: An Essential Piece to the Digital Marketing Puzzle

Our customers at GaggleAMP typically come to us with a multitude of problems, but they all usually boil down to one thing, engagement. They are looking to more deeply engage their workforce and part of this includes getting them to participate in the marketing activities of the company. The solution is to onboard your CEOs and employees, show them the value and promoting engagement in the ranks. Developed in conjunction with an employee advocacy program, your company can reap the rewards of an effective digital marketing engagement strategy.

-Your employee advocates are pivotal in the success of your content marketing strategy, and their success can greatly impact the success of your company as a whole.--

Now you have a starting point for your employee advocacy program. If you're ready, you can [start a free trial of GaggleAMP](#) and start amplifying your digital engagement today!

Case Study:

Dynatrace Increases Social Engagement 10x with GaggleAMP

As a Social Media Manager, Douglas Jensen knew he had an opportunity to resonate with his audience on a deeper level through employee sharing of content. "Dynatrace is an industry leader in its product category. We have a lot of positive things to say, but it's more interesting and compelling when it comes from employees rather than when it comes from a single source."

GaggleAMP has gotten Dynatrace talking, it's gotten different internal groups engaging with each other on how they can do things better, not just in GaggleAMP, but through many of their other channels and marketing programs. It's gotten employees thinking of where social interactions will take them in terms of a sales engagement.

Employee sharing helps build those early top of the funnel, beginning of the pipeline relationships and helps maintain them through the funnel and the pipeline. Doug has seen a correlation between the increase in conversations and increased deal sizes. "Our employees are having more conversations and opportunities."