

8 Undisputed Ways to Convert Employee Advocacy Into Content Marketing ROI

EBOOK

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Introduction

In previous eBooks, we've discussed the reduction of influencer marketers' reach. Online users often find them untrustworthy and overhyped. **Without the human connection between brands and their followers, social media influencers are just puppets, touting the lines their ventriloquist advertisers paid for.**

Why not use your employees as your true brand ambassadors? They have their own personal social networks outside of work. They have an innate understanding of your products and services. They're the mavens who attract new talent, humanize your brand and strengthen company culture — all of which reverberates outward into the marketplace.

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Employee advocates emblemize your company's image, its aspirations and its differentiators. A dedicated employee advocacy program can effectively convert every staff member into a marketing asset.

So while you're fighting for every marketing dollar in your annual budget and experimenting with tactics that may or may not work, **your marketing MVPs may be one desk over, eating their \$12 salads.**



1. Incentivize employee social sharing for higher click-through rates and reach

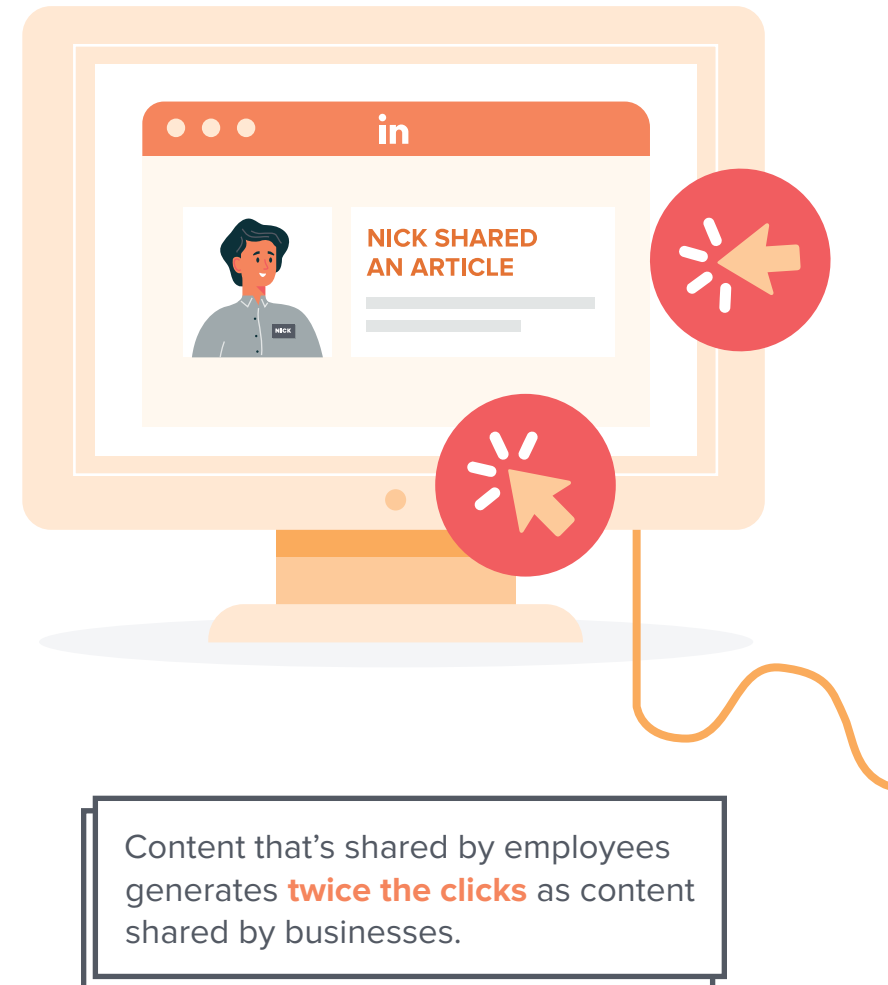
LinkedIn found that, in total, **employees have 10 times the social following as the brands they work for**. Even better, content that's shared by employees generates **twice the clicks** as content shared by businesses: the same content, two very different outcomes.

The data is pretty conclusive.

If you're creating content for max shareability, engagement and awareness, there's no better way to broadcast your message than to allow your employees to do it for you.

Why not run an internal contest: Whoever on your staff gets the most social media engagement (likes, shares, comments, etc.) on company-created content in a given month receives some sort of compensation. This could be a gift card of their choice, an extra PTO day or a sponsored off-site training session with an industry expert.

Brand advocates are sitting in your break room right now; they just need you to formalize a program that motivates them.



2. Mandate monthly sales-marketing knowledge-sharing

Marketing and sales alignment may seem like playing the long game, but there are intermediary steps your brand can take to extract rewards in the meantime.

Have your marketing and sales teams sit down face to face once a month so that both departments are up to speed on pressing customer needs, informational gaps in the prospect pipeline and lead quality.



What common questions do the sales reps hear most often? Is marketing content enabling lead nurture or falling flat? This setup is essentially an internal word-of-mouth marketing program where you can benchmark and measure the flow of ideas and cross-department solutions.

Each team can use this session to brainstorm better mechanisms for promoting the brand and driving higher revenue. You're basically allowing your employees to do their jobs to the best of their ability, equipped with every possible data point they might need.

In the process, your employees advocate for **stronger operating procedures, better branding and more targeted campaigns**, which can reshape how your company goes to market.



3. Get executives to participate in video content

Employee engagement and participation doesn't have to be the result of coercion or incentivization packages; **it could be a top-down example of leadership.**

In the digital marketing space, Orbit Media CMO Andy Crestodina films and posts short videos on LinkedIn, giving the public access to his ideas, his company's capabilities and his insights into trends that may impact other brands. They often receive enormous engagement, and they only take a few hours to ideate, shoot, edit and publish.

An advocacy program that's visible to every level of leadership — and staff — in the company **sets a tone of accountability that is accelerative.**

Turn your executives into thought leaders by getting them to participate in high-level corporate branding initiatives, be it promos, conference livestreams or even humorous internal spoof videos. The C-suite should be advocating every bit as much as the staff they oversee.

This sort of trickle-down advocacy model simultaneously supports social-media and lead-gen efforts by connecting prospects directly with top brass. An advocacy program that's visible to every level of leadership — and staff — in the company **sets a tone of accountability that is accelerative, as it incentivizes mass participation and gains more steam over time.**



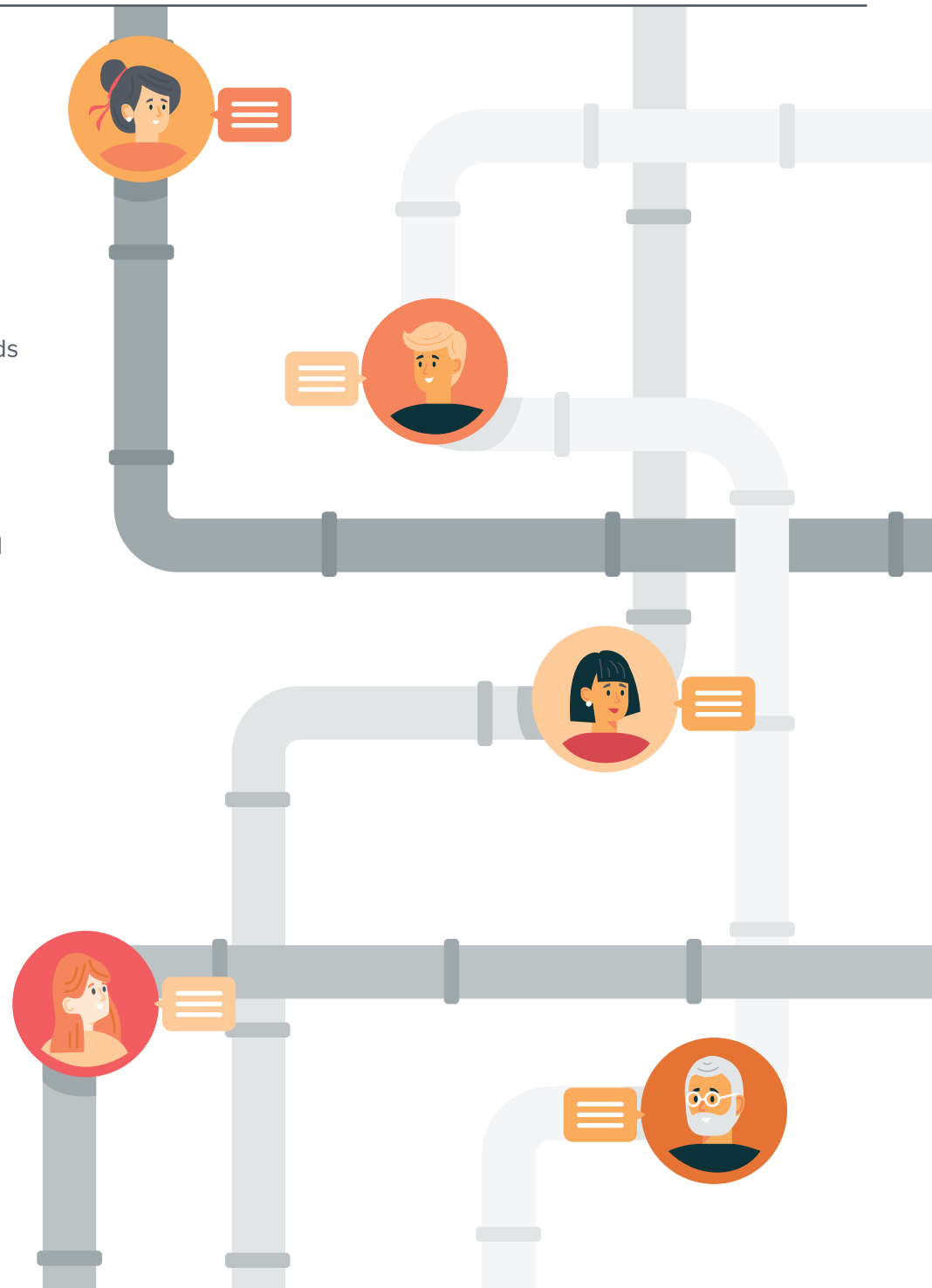
4. Curate an external-content sharing pipeline

What do your employees share under their own volition? What do they find interesting on social media? Are their respective social feeds populated with interesting content based on whom they follow?

Ask your employees to pass along the best tidbits of that week — it doesn't necessarily have to relate strictly to your industry. Opinions, think pieces, breaking news, nascent technology, powerful photography and memorable memes are all valuable in their own way, but, as a marketing manager, you couldn't possibly be the sole source of compiling the best of the best around the web.

That's why you should lean on fellow staff to augment part of this duty. Then, you can curate findings you deem most relevant and useful to your brand's audience. **At regular intervals, post and share others' content that piqued your interest — it might do the same for your followers as well.**

You can create a separate email group where all staff members can forward along interesting insights from their own social networks. Now it's your job to present this info to the public in a way that benefits your brand.



5. Map messaging to market needs – but also employee values

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a growing movement. Employees prefer to work for companies that share their values and that take on larger roles on public issues, beyond just selling products and worrying about margins.

The same goes for customers and social media followers. **Eighty-six percent** of U.S. consumers expect brands to take a stand on environmental and social issues. Purchasing patterns, when dissected, are really just reflections of consumer ideals. Customer X cares about environmental issues, and so they buy from brands that are eco-conscious.



Executives should identify, understand and mirror the attitudes of their staff's out-of-work beliefs. Business jargon is boring, and it stays at work. How do your employees converse during their personal time? What motivates them to wake up each morning? How would they approach the business if they were the CEO for a day?

Integrating your staff's values into your core mission statement is key. It will drive employees to work even harder, care more and advocate on behalf of the brand because they are advocating on behalf of their own deeply held beliefs as well.

It's easier to engage and activate workers when messaging mimics morality.

6. Allow for cross-training and off-site employee pursuits

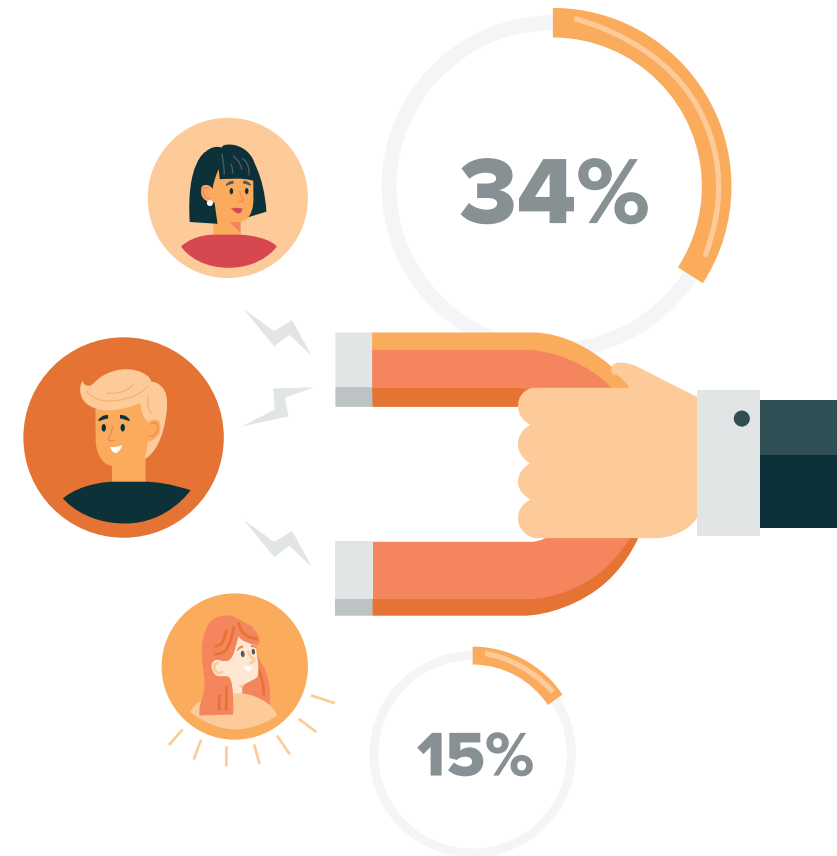
Employee advocacy programs can be nurtured outside of your office's four walls. In fact, professional development (PD) initiatives are a highly sought after career perk for most workers, especially programs that are sponsored by the company and are exclusive to a small group of individual specialists.

Companies with PD opportunities report **34 percent** higher employee retention, and their workers are **15 percent** more engaged. Plus, companies with formalized training have **24 percent** higher profit margins.

A project manager may want to increase their skill set laterally, diving into data-based research or tackling a creative project from start to finish. A sales rep may want to try their hand at web dev or social media. Employees are not one-track workers; they have interests, hobbies and curiosities that exist outside their currently defined job specs, and you can help promote these ambitions through cross-training programs.

Additionally, companies like **General Assembly** offer immersive courses in a wide range of digital marketing fields that could prove lucrative to your business. Or, you can go the online route and enroll employees in tutorials from **LinkedIn Learning**, **Lynda.com**, **HubSpot Academy** and more.

Diversifying each employee's skill set diversifies your company's pipeline of ideas, strengths and solutions.

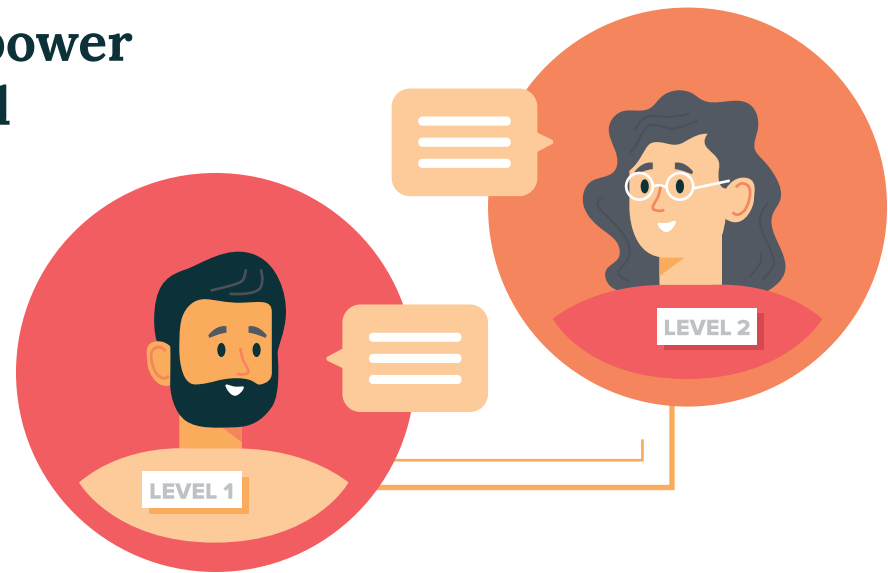


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7. Recognize top performers and empower them to train up, down and parallel

Top performers are in the upper echelon of each department. They show discipline in every facet of the job, outperform quotas and embody positive workplace culture. **Now let them train others to do the same.**

Being lectured by managers, directors or executives can often feel like a one-way conversation, and staff may feel uncomfortable asking the questions they need answered. But being coached by a fellow colleague to whom they don't directly report opens up broader discussions.



Top performers should also be coaching their superiors and their peers. If someone on your marketing team knows more about analytics than anyone else in the company, let them join sales meetings to spread their knowledge. Offer them a pathway to present during quarterly company meetings as well.

Ample recognition and facetime empowers your best employees to **convert their professional victories into larger marketing or companywide victories**, resulting in long-term success that's self-sustainable and fulfilling. Looking forward, you should be moving beyond just employee advocacy programs — you should be creating employee advocacy platforms as well. Having well-defined, highly sought after and respected platforms — seminars, presentations, workshops, etc. — adds esteem and admiration to the opportunity itself.



8. Report on companywide objectives and metrics

It's tough to act in solidarity if no one is aware of what your company is striving for.

Distill your three main quarterly or monthly objectives into single sentences.

Now send an email alerting the rest of the staff. You'd be surprised how much this can personalize key performance indicators and solicit additional ideas from staff members who never would have had the platform from which to speak up.

Executives should set goals beyond just “drive revenue” or “increase our account base.” Use specific metrics, the tactics to achieve said goals and the deadlines on which success/failure will be reported.



By democratizing critical business information, everyone is in the same ship. And if your goal is to “drive revenue,” then the marketing team, for example, can home in on several ways to help achieve this, such as shifting resources toward a lead-generation strategy, improving lead quality and creating bottom-of-funnel assets.

With just a simple email — or a short video message — the company is fully aligned on what's at stake. Such a quick, frictionless program can be launched tomorrow with few obstacles standing in your way.



Conclusion

Employee advocacy programs are more than internal cultural initiatives filled with backslapping and self-promotion. They're instrumental to redefining the relationship between employees and customers. They transform every staff member into marketers and brand champions.

These benefits are enormous, and more vital than ever.

Google continues to roll out intelligent SERP features, which steal clicks from Page 1 content. In the last two years, “no-click” searches — queries that result in a user finding their info from a Google SERP without needing to click — have increased **11 percent** and **9.5 percent** on mobile and desktop, respectively. This trend puts a ceiling on how well organic content can perform, and how much revenue it can bring to your company.

And marketing maturity is on the rise across most business sectors, making the competition smarter and margins narrower. **Seventy percent** of B2B marketers and **74 percent** of B2C marketers say their marketing programs have improved in the last year.

In the face of such economics, what are you going to do to generate marketing ROI? **In 2019, employee advocacy could be your best bet.**





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