

# Social Marketing: How to Build an Employee Advocacy Program

Helping Employees Use LinkedIn and Twitter to Drive  
Brand Awareness, Traffic, and Leads

By NEAL SCHAFFER & PEOPLELINX

PeopleLINX



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How can marketers make their companies stand out in the increasingly crowded social media landscape?

Social media is swarming with brands. More than 93% of U.S. companies with over 100 employees market themselves on social networks.

Your company probably has a corporate Twitter handle, a Facebook page and a LinkedIn profile. You may be investing in paid advertising and sponsored content.

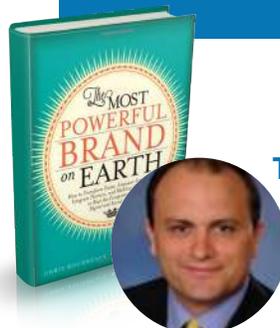
That was innovative a couple years ago, but now you look like every other brand. How do you differentiate yourself in your use of social? The answer is literally staring you in the face: Your employees.

Most social media strategies focus on the brand entity and overlook the power and influence of employee use of social networks. That's a huge oversight. According to one recent global survey, 88% of employees use at least one social media site for personal use, of which 50% are already posting about their brand.

That's a huge word-of-mouth marketing opportunity. The more employees you have and the larger their social graph is, the bigger your opportunity.

**"In social media, people - not brands - are the channel."**

**- Chris Boudreaux,  
The Most Powerful Brand on Earth**



**PeopleLinx** was founded on the insight that the next level of social marketing value will be achieved by companies who systematically and strategically mobilize their employees on social media.

We use the term "Employee Advocacy" for the attention that employees generate for a brand by using social media. It's a new category alongside the traditional paid, earned, and owned media buckets. As social marketing matures, Employee Advocacy may become the most important of these categories.

PeopleLinx is a leading provider of Employee Advocacy solutions. For this e-Book, we've teamed up with social business expert Neal Schaffer to help marketers understand how to best implement Employee Advocacy programs inside their companies.

We've written this resource from a product-neutral perspective, because Employee Advocacy is bigger than any single solution provider. Whether or not you use PeopleLinx, we hope you find it helpful!



## Employee Advocacy Expands Reach and Creates Trust

Employee Advocacy's business value can be summed up in two words: Reach and Trust.

### Reach

Employee networks dramatically expand brand reach in social media. As PeopleLinx founder Nathan Egan puts it, "Your organization has thousands of websites, not just one. Employees are the long tail of your brand identity."

It's simple math. Estimates on the size of an average LinkedIn network range from 160-180 connections per member, and Twitter estimates are slightly higher. Even accounting for shared connections, the employees of a 15,000-person company have a combined reach of over 2 million connections.

That audience is almost all additive to brand reach. Studies at Cisco and Dell found only a 2-8% overlap

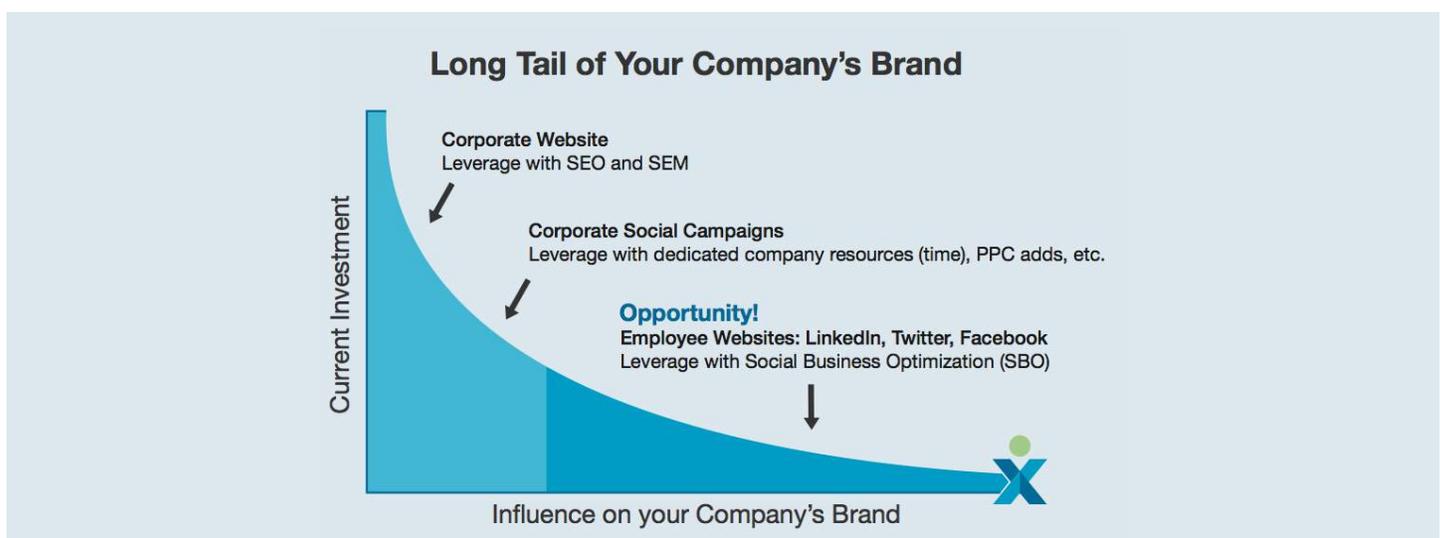
between employee social networks and networks associated with the brands' corporate identities.

### Trust

Employees also generate a level of trust that traditional brand messaging can't even touch. Consider the following statistics:

- **84%** of people trust recommendations from people they know, while only **15%** trust recommendations from brands (Gartner).
- **70%** of customer brand perception is determined by experiences with people (Ken Irons, Market Leader)
- Leads developed through employee social marketing convert **7x** more frequently than other leads (IBM).

Recently, both employee and customer use of social networks has reached the tipping point where Employee Advocacy can contribute dramatically to their social marketing performance. Now is the time to act!



# SOCIAL MEDIA HOLDS SPECIAL BENEFITS FOR SALES

Social networks are particularly valuable for your sales team. A recent study found that sales reps using social media outsell 78% of their peers.

LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook are all valuable selling tools for reps who know how to use them. No matter which tools they use, sales reps should leverage social networks to accomplish five main objectives according to social selling expert Jill Rowley:

- **Establish** their credibility and professionalism with prospects through compelling social profiles.
- **Build** relevant networks that keep them top-of-mind with prospects, customers, channel partners, and industry influencers.
- **Promote** thought leadership that capture attention and attract inbound opportunities.
- **Listen** to customers and prospects in order to understand needs, priorities, and topics of interest.
- **Measure** social activity to assess value and refine approach.

The benefits of Employee Advocacy will go to sales managers who take a systematic approach to empowering their reps on social. While some reps have an intuitive feel for Employee Advocacy, most need (and want) guidance from their managers, who in-turn might need some help from your marketing team.

**“The sales team has embraced social as part of their everyday communications process. It’s no longer a sales job; it’s a relationship job, and social is all about relationships.”**



**- Joe Minnix,**  
**Head of Internal Sales**  
**at Allianz Global Investors**



## Defining Your Employee Advocacy Strategy

As with any marketing program, you should start by defining your business objectives. Who are you trying to reach? What are you trying to accomplish? Are you trying to increase brand awareness? Drive new leads? Deepen customer relationships? Befriend industry influencers? All of the above?

You'll need to tie your Employee Advocacy objectives back to your overall marketing and company-wide KPIs. While every company will be different, the following are the most popular objectives, as well as sample metrics for ROI measurement, for launching such a program in a social business context:

- **Brand awareness:** Social media reach, website traffic, search volume.

- **Customer relationships:** Net Promoter Score, renewal rates, upsell revenue.
- **Lead generation:** Lead volume, conversion rates.
- **Risk reduction:** Policy compliance, training completions.
- **Employer Branding:** Recruiting costs, time to hire, employee retention.

Once you've defined objectives, decide which specific social networking sites you will target. Employee Advocacy programs are most effective when they concentrate on platforms where your employees, customers, and prospects are, as well as where they expect to find you.

**Table – Which networks are right for your company?**

Network	Best Ways to Use It
Facebook	Interact in a personal way with a vast network of consumers and families.
Twitter	Generate buzz across multiple market segments; establish and nurture relationships with industry influencers.
LinkedIn	Nurture 1-1 your team members' personal relationships with individual prospects, customers, and partners.
Google+	Increase your brand's findability on the web by increasing your content's Google search ranking.
Instagram	Showcase user-generated images around your products; put a human face on the brand by telling "behind-the-scenes" stories.
Pinterest	Visually associate your products, services, and brands with specific lifestyles and demographic groups.



# BUILDING A PROGRAM: THE THREE I'S

Now that you've defined your goals, it's time to build the foundations for the long-term success of your program through the three I's: **Internal Support**, **Infrastructure**, and **Incentive**.

**Internal support** for your program is a necessity for it to have company-wide power. It's essential for company executives to both "talk the talk" of social business and to "walk the walk" by maintaining excellent profiles, building relevant networks, and sharing content. (Unlike most corporate initiatives, social business is public. Employees can see when the company leaders are practicing what they preach.)

Best-in-class executives go even further. For example, Marriott's CEO, Arne Sorenson, is a LinkedIn influencer who writes about management, leadership, and the hospitality industry. His very public embrace of Employee Advocacy encourages his employees to get in the game as well. It's no surprise that one survey points to leadership as being the most important driver of activating your employees.

We already touched upon the need to prepare content for your program as part of your **infrastructure**, but there are many other things you will need to have, including:

- Social media policy (thorough legal document)
- Social media guidelines (a few simple rules of thumb)
- Training on best practices in the professional use of social media
- An easy process for employees to share company-approved content
- Scalable process to measure employee activity and business impact

Finally, you will need to consider what incentive you will provide your employees to help maximize their participation. The potential for incentives is limited only by your creativity, but here are some ideas for things you can offer to launch your program and make it fun and engaging for your employees:

- Gamification (company-wide or by office/region and/or department)



- Badging
- Providing swag
- Internal Recognition
- Exclusive Access (to executives, events, et. al.)

Some companies even offer additional bonuses or paid time off for employee participation. Don't go overboard on incentives, but it can be a nice way to recognize those who organically participate in your program. Offer only those incentives which fit your company culture and brand.

## Sourcing Content for Employees to Share

Social media was created for people, not businesses. To be successful, you'll need to respect your employees and understand that they're letting you "borrow" their personal brand every time they share a company brand post from you.

The best content for an Employee Advocacy program is content which:

- Delivers value to your target audience(s);
- Supports your company's value propositions; and
- Inspires your employees to share it with their friends.

All three criteria are important. If your employees share content that's not valuable, they're just spamming. If they share content that doesn't support your company's value propositions, they're not marketing. If they share content that doesn't inspire them, they're not being authentic (and they won't keep doing it).

The right content can also position your employees as thought leaders in your industry, which is especially important for social selling. The content your employees post should combine internally created content as well as nuggets that are curated from other sources. Diversity of voices and perspectives increases employee engagement by offering employees a selection of content that resonates with them and their personal networks.

**"Good content has to be relatable from the customer's point-of-view, demonstrating that the brand knows who the customer is and what they stand for. Our content must first pass my 'Barbecue Test'; it has to be so engaging that once people see it, they want to invite us to their BBQ. Now THAT's authentic!"**



**Michelle Lapierre**  
**Senior Director, Customer Experience & Social Media, Marriott Rewards**



## PeopleLinx Share Stream Dashboard

Optimize **Share** Training Reporting

PeopleLinx Marketing Josh

### Share Stream

### Share History

Share provides a stream of new and relevant content that you can share with your LinkedIn network in just one click. It's an easy way to engage your connections and build new business relationships. If any of your connections interact with your post (like, comment or share), your content becomes visible to their entire network. Therefore, the potential reach of your post is exponential!

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**Date Added:** April 25, 2014 at 9:31 a.m. EDT | **Expires:** Never



#### 5 Tips to Optimize Your New Twitter Profile

An overview of all the changes with the new Twitter profile and how you can make the most of the design to maximize your marketing.

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#### A Look at LinkedIn's New Publishing Platform

B2B marketers will soon have another way to reach audiences via LinkedIn. The question, though, is when it will launch, who will have access and what it will look like.

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# MEASURING THE SUCCESS OF YOUR EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY PROGRAM

As the weeks and months roll on, it will be important for you to measure the success of your employee social marketing program to gauge its ROI as well as to report back to internal stakeholders on your successes.

In addition to the objective-based metrics described above, there are some standard participation and reach metrics you'll need to measure. These aren't your final business goals, but they're useful operational metrics that will help you assess and refine your program execution.



**Steven Webster**

**Director of Digital Sales Enablement  
and Social Strategy at a Fortune 100  
Financial Services Firm**

**“Our program creates tighter ties to our prospects, clients and intermediary partners. That drives increases in business value.”**



**Table – Operational Metrics for Employee Advocacy Programs:**

Conversion rate	How many of the employees you've invited into the program have actually participated?
Active Participation	What percentage of your participants are sharing on any given week?
Social Network Participation of Participants	Of your participants, which social networks are they sharing in? Has your program encouraged them to try new networks?
Content Publishing of Participants	Are your participants promoting your content frequently, and over time more frequently?
Feedback of Participant Satisfaction	Is this trending upward?
Top Contributors	Which specific individuals or teams are sharing most/least? Which ones are generating the most/least engagement per share?
Internal Influencers	Has your program helped build up the influence of your employees in social media? Are there any particular employees who can be recognized as being social media influencers in their industry who can be tapped into for other social media marketing efforts?
Organic Reach of Content	As a result of your program, how much more reach has your content been displayed?
Engagement of Content	What type of engagement do you see before and after the launch of your program? Is it on the increase?
Which Content is Shared More	You might find that some types of content are shared more internally than others, leading you to further optimize the content that you curate for the program.
Which Content Performs Better on Which Platforms	There might be certain platforms where specific types of content are more engaging. Analyzing the data will lead you to insights that will help your entire social media marketing efforts.



## The Evolving Relationship between Marketing and Sales

Social networking is fundamentally redefining the relationship between Marketing and Sales.

Before social, the division between Marketing and Sales was fairly clear: Marketing generated leads, and Sales closed them. With social, that bright line is getting blurry.

Social gives sales reps the tools to communicate with buyers and prospects in a scalable, measurable way. They can listen for buying signals, attract inbound leads, and even qualify those leads using information gleaned from social. In other words, they can *market*.

And it's not just the reps. By empowering the full employee base on social, companies can exponentially increase the size of their "social selling" channel. From the C-Suite to Product Development to Customer Service, we all have a voice.

Where does that leave the Marketing team? Marketing still owns the overall mission to generate leads for Sales to close, but their role is slowly shifting from a full-time player (solely executing external campaigns) to a part-time coach (fostering employee execution). Marketing is in the best position to guide employees to use social in ways that drive brand awareness, generate leads, attract talent and deepen customer relationships.

They are the sherpas leading the organization's climb up the social selling mountain – and remaining true to their mission by fostering lead generation at true scale as a result.

## Conclusion

It's an exciting time to be in business. Social is opening up new opportunities to increase reach, generate trust, and engage prospects and buyers. Every employee has a role to play. So what are you waiting for? Fasten your seat belt, gas up the car, and enjoy the ride!

**To learn more about how PeopleLinx can help you launch an Employee Advocacy program, please visit [www.peoplelinx.com](http://www.peoplelinx.com) or contact us at [info@peoplelinx.com](mailto:info@peoplelinx.com).**

**"PeopleLinx helps us generate leads, drive more sales, and get closer to our customers"**



**Mark Gibson**

**SVP North American Sales at Experian**





**Social Selling Made Easy.**

