



MARKETING  
INSIDER  
GROUP

# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO EMPLOYEE ACTIVATION

# WHAT'S INSIDE

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## **03 Why Employee Activation is The Future of Marketing**

- 04 The Brand vs. Employees Who Represent Your Brand
- 05 Activated Employees Talk
- 06 Your Employees Are Micro Influencers
- 07 Employee Activation Translates Directly Into Customer Loyalty

## **08 What Is Employee Activation?**

- 10 Employee Activation vs. Employee Advocacy
- 10 Employee Activation Fosters Trust
- 11 Activated Employees Drive A Business's Marketing
- 12 Employee Activation Starts With Improving Communication Channels

## **13 How To Activate Your Employees**

- 14 Identify Your Activators
- 15 Foster Internal Social Engagement
- 16 Encourage Your Employees To Be Content Creators
- 17 Give Your Employees Platforms
- 18 Create Content Employees Want To Share
- 18 Gamification For Keeping Activation Going
- 19 Keep Improving With Feedback

## **20 The Right Messaging To Gain Buy-in For Your Employee Activation Program**

- 21 Good Management Matters To Employees More Than Most Think
- 22 Your Customers (And Future Hires) Listen To Your Employees More Than You Think
- 23 Technology Makes Employee Activation Easier Than You Think
- 24 Activation Has More Potential For Them Than Most Employees Realize
- 24 Getting Past The Assumptions

## **25 Why Marketing Should Own Culture And Employee Management**

- 27 Why Is Culture So Important Right Now?
- 28 The Shared Goals Of An Engaged Culture And Management
- 29 Why Marketing Leaders Are Primed For The Culture Shift

## **30 When To Start Activating Your Employees For Marketing Success**

- 31 How Employees Can Boost Your Marketing ROI
- 33 Is Your Company Ready For Employee Activation?
- 35 Give Your Employees A Reason To Be Part Of Your Marketing
- 35 Start Activating Your Employees Today





## WHY EMPLOYEE ACTIVATION IS THE FUTURE OF MARKETING

What if your organization was staffed by a team of experts – employees who are skilled, driven, and have a lot to offer, not only to your customers but also to society?

Imagine what a powerhouse your company would become. We're not just talking consumer trust here. This is about respect and your audience fostering a deep confidence in what your company can do for them – because your employees are recognized as thought leaders and individuals who are passionate about what they do.

Here's the thing. You are sitting on this golden egg right now. Your employees are skilled experts with their own unique and worth-

while beliefs, perspectives and insights to share. But, it's your job to activate them in order to harness this potential.

Through employee activation, you'll find yourself as the coach of the dream team of your industry. You'll be leading people who your buyers turn to for advice, tips, and to learn how things are done. For B2B brands in particular, where confidence in your brand supersedes details like pricing strategy and ad campaign by a long shot, activated employees will motivate your buyers and forge customer loyalty like nothing else can.

## The Brand vs. Employees Who Represent Your Brand

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The reality is, 'your brand' is an entity without a face. It's a thing. It has no family. It's never struggled. It hasn't accomplished anything. So, how much, really, can you expect consumers to trust it?

But, when your employees are themselves the face of your brand, you're giving your audience someone to believe in. That's powerful stuff.

Still emerging from (and for many, still living in) the traditional corporate structure and the traditional marketing methods, in which a structured, controlled, carefully crafted brand identity is used to market to customers, a lot of companies aren't tapping into their employees' voices for marketing, sticking with the brand voice only.

And let's be honest. Change takes time. So, let those other companies slowly wake up

while you are running with your industry's dream team.

Employee activation involves relinquishing control and empowering employees to share their expertise. It's giving them a platform, supporting and encouraging them to express themselves and share their own personal brand, which, in turn, comes back as a positive reflection of the 'mother brand.' That's not just a marketing technique. It's a shift in organizational culture. But, it's one that will stretch the reach of your marketing to a whole new level, helping to engage, inspire, and retain customers.

Here's why you may want to start launching your employee activation initiative, or improve what you already have, today.

## Activated Employees Talk

One of the biggest reasons employee activation is so effective is that it is another channel for person-to-person communication. You already know how useful word of mouth marketing (WOMM) is – 64 percent of marketing executives view WOMM as the most effective marketing method and it's believed to drive \$6 trillion in consumer spending annually.

But, WOMM is only as powerful as the voice the word is coming from. Where a lot of marketers go wrong is they believe social media marketing is WOMM. But, the reality is, as much as two-thirds of word of mouth that makes an impact happens offline.

Market researcher and author of *Shops that POP*, Pamela Danziger explains:

“While digital WOMM is important, the most effective and powerful WOMM is analog

taking place person-to-person. Engaging customers in conversation that makes them feel valued and appreciated can go a long way to encouraging them to tell others... Retailers need to put a word of mouth marketing system in place that is heavy on the analog side of the equation that will amplify social media efforts.”

When your employees are invested in the company they work for, not just to earn a salary, but because they are viewed as a valued part of the brand, they are more likely going to have those engaging conversations with customers.

Think of it this way. What they say about the company they are a part of, is also what they are expressing about themselves, their career, and what they believe in for their future.

## Your Employees Are Micro Influencers

Like word of mouth marketing, using micro influencers – niche experts within your industry who have a social media following – is a powerful tool for building trust with your target buyers. A study by Expertcity found that 82 percent of consumers are highly likely to follow a recommendation from a micro influencer.

Your creatives, data analysts, strategists, and other experts on your team are the skilled, passionate, knowledgeable influencers people want to learn from. You have to look at who your audience is looking for, but there are people within your organization who can expand the reach of your marketing simply through sharing news, insights, and their own thoughts on personal or business social media profiles, as well as other channels.

Here are some examples:

- Financial services – what financial advice are your finance experts sharing by writing featured blog posts on your company website?
- Software company – encourage your internal experts to share their knowledge through online tutorials. Hold Q&A sessions where your audience can ask questions – even better, use Facebook live streaming or a live chat platform to up the appeal of your marketing event.
- Even B2C brands can harness their internal micro influencers – think beauty tutorials, golfing instructional videos, healthy eating eBooks, style guides – all created by your internal experts. This is how you can get premium content to generate leads, and at the same time, build relationships between your customers and your experts/employees.

When you tap into your employees for micro influencer campaigns, you also tap into their social networks. But, more importantly, in the long-term you are effectively helping to grow their individual online presence, giving them even more influence with your audience.



## Employee Activation Translates Directly Into Customer Loyalty

If customer loyalty isn't on your marketing priority short list, it should be. New customers are expensive to convert while your existing customers are likely to bring in more revenue. You may have heard the stat – or experienced the difference in your marketing ROI firsthand when you focus on loyalty and retention – it costs 5 to 7 times more to acquire a new customer than it does to motivate action from a current customer.

And what's the number one way to encourage customer loyalty? Like I said almost a decade ago – it's cultivating satisfied and engaged customers. Companies with en-

gaged employees outperform those without by as much as 202 percent.

Pay attention to your employees. Ask, measure, and track employee sentiments so you can see where you can improve and what you can do to empower them.

Communicate with them – how can you support them to create a platform to share their expertise? What ideas do they have? When they are engaged, inspired, and motivated, the impact of their positivity and expertise is mind-blowing.



## WHAT IS EMPLOYEE ACTIVATION?

Want to run a more effective organization? Employee activation is the key to driving your business into the future with the resilience required to move further into the post-digital era.

When your employees are activated, they are engaged, more productive, and will help to establish your business as a trustworthy, authentic brand with whom your target buyers can get excited about doing business.

Let's face it. Things are moving fast in workplace culture. Businesses who have put in the foundational work for a successful digital transformation are able to offer a better customer experience and live up to the high bar set by the customer-centric marketing model.

But, we're not done evolving. Right now, visionary companies are seeing that the next stage is not forging a more intensive relationship with customers with all our sophisticated digital tools. It's time to look internally.

Where the focus has been on empowering customers, now we're seeing the benefit of empowering employees too. It's a more dynamic level of the engineered serendipity I talked about a few years ago where you win, I win, the customer, employee, manager, marketer, brand – everyone wins because we're elevating the connections with more technology and more information. The next stage after digital transformation and customer centricity is employee activation. Managers and leaders, at both the executive and department level, need to create a more meaningful work experience for employees.



Better communication. Inspired advocacy. Alignment and shared vision. The results of engaged, activated employees are mind-blowing.

- A boost in customer retention rates by as much as 18 percent.
- A 20 to 25 percent jump in productivity.
- The Workplace Research Foundation found that increasing employee engagement investments by 10 percent can increase profits by \$2,400 per employee, every year.

But, just like accepting the hard work and multifaceted change that is necessary for digital transformation, this next business evolution doesn't happen overnight.

Especially when we are currently working with some dismal statistics. The number of enthusiastic employees has been edging up slightly over the past few years but it's still low.

Imagine how potent your marketing would be with 99 percent committed and connected employees, not 33 percent?

But, to get anywhere close to the ultimate engagement goal, you need to understand what employee activation is.

Where a lot of marketing leaders and managers get off track is they mistake employee advocacy with employee activation.



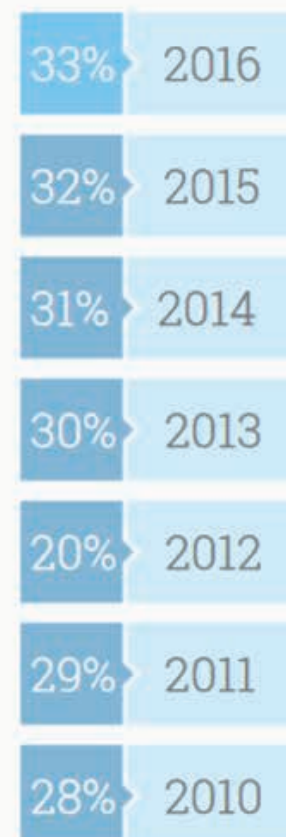
**Companies with engaged employees  
outperform those without by up to**

**202%**

Source: Gallup

### State of the U.S. Workplace

*U.S. employees said they are enthusiastic and committed to their work, Gallup*



## Employee Activation vs. Employee Advocacy

True activation goes far beyond the basic, two-dimensional concept of holding out a carrot to get your employees to become brand advocates. You want to activate your employees so they become advocates. But, the end goal is much broader than asking your employees to share press releases and brand content on their social media pages.

The intent is to not just incentivize but to empower. Change the intention, and you alter the direction in which your business is moving.

I believe employee activation is the process of encouraging your employees to create and share their passions and expertise. This shows your employees they are valued, giving them more confidence to express their own personal ingenuity at work, which in turn, reflects on the level of customer service, sales and marketing, and even the quality of the products or services offered by your company. Ultimately, the intention to empower your employees to greater success puts your organization on the course to greater, and more sustainable, success.

## Employee Activation Fosters Trust

Activation is a trust builder all around.

Guess what? When you trust your employees by empowering them with the right platforms, tools, and encouragement, they're more likely to trust you. This is more important than simply improving work relationships.

According to a recent study, for 93 percent of employees, trust in a direct boss is critical

for work satisfaction. And, listen to the research or just common sense and life experience – employees who aren't satisfied at work can't do their best at work.

But, here's where employee activation becomes really monumental if you get it right. Your buyers trust your employees, possibly more than upper management, the PR department, or general brand messaging.



**41%** of people believe that a company's employees rank higher in public trust than a firm's PR department, CEO or founder.

Source: Edelman's Trust Barometer

## Activated Employees Drive A Business's Marketing

Inspire your employees to become a part of your brand messaging, and your marketing takes on a whole new level of importance and reach. How you activate your employees will depend on what works for your organization and what specific goals you want to achieve, but here are a few strategies you can use:

- Invest in your employees' growth with skills training
- Develop an internal mentorship program
- Hold regular one-on-one's to give employees a chance to directly tell you what they need in order to do a better job (hint: this is 1000 times more effective than employee surveys)
- Set up and encourage individual social

media accounts supported by your brand or web pages for your employees to share content and ideas and to showcase their own work and expertise

- Offer more opportunities for employees to take on temporary or rotating leadership roles
- Feature their stories, projects, and accomplishments on brand channels

Trust that the efforts you put into your employees – from the intention of empowering their passions – will pay off, and you'll get back way more than you put in. They'll have everything they need to advocate for your brand, as well as a reason to do so because they know they are working for an employer who believes in them.

## Employee Activation Starts With Improving Communication Channels

So, you can get up on the soapbox and tell your employees you want them to shine. You can send out an internal newsletter or a weekly email.



Or, you can upgrade your internal communication channels and empower your internal communicators in order to more effectively activate your employees.

Communication is likely going to be a roadblock in getting your employee activation initiative off the ground unless you tackle this problem early on.

- How do your employees like to communicate?
- What channels do they respond to?
- What works and where are the failures in collaborative platforms that you are using right now?
- What communication tools are available today thanks to technology that your organization hasn't yet adopted, but should?

Look at this statistic – a study by Siegal+Gale found that a third of employees find their workplace complex and difficult to navigate because of a lack of transparent communication.

Tackle communication first and then develop a strategy to activate your employees. Just like all the work you've been doing to engage your buyers – exploring new communication channels and then refining your delivery as you learn more about your customers, finding more effective ways to motivate your target audience, and developing more sophisticated content marketing strategies to empower your customers – it's time to do it with the people who are the driving force behind your brand.





## HOW TO **ACTIVATE YOUR EMPLOYEES**

Looking for a way to bring your brand authority to the next level? Consumers don't just have higher expectations today, gravitating towards quality content, better experiences, and meaningful brands. It's also harder to gain their trust.

Over 40 percent of American consumers trust brands less than they did 20 years ago. And, nearly half want to see a stronger identity in the brands they engage with.

In order to, not only gain back consumer trust but also to keep it, brands need to reveal the man behind the curtain and stop hiding every company's greatest asset – employees.

Which is why employee activation is critical to energizing your marketing right now, let alone reaping the productivity rewards of an engaged culture. Studies show that consumers are more likely to buy from brands they feel are authentic, and are less likely to be swayed by ads.

Activated employees are the key to establishing your brand as a trustworthy company in this evolved consumer-brand-employee relationship matrix. When they are engaged and empowered, they become something more profound than brand advocates.

They are the passionate people who your target audience can look to as industry thought leaders.

A company recognized for its skilled, enthusiastic experts, on top of quality products or services, dedicated customer service, and a strong brand identity – now that's a force to be reckoned with.

But, activating your employees to be more than passive participants is going to require more than an incentive program. You have to create that spark in your employees and then commit to keeping it alive.

## Identify Your Activators

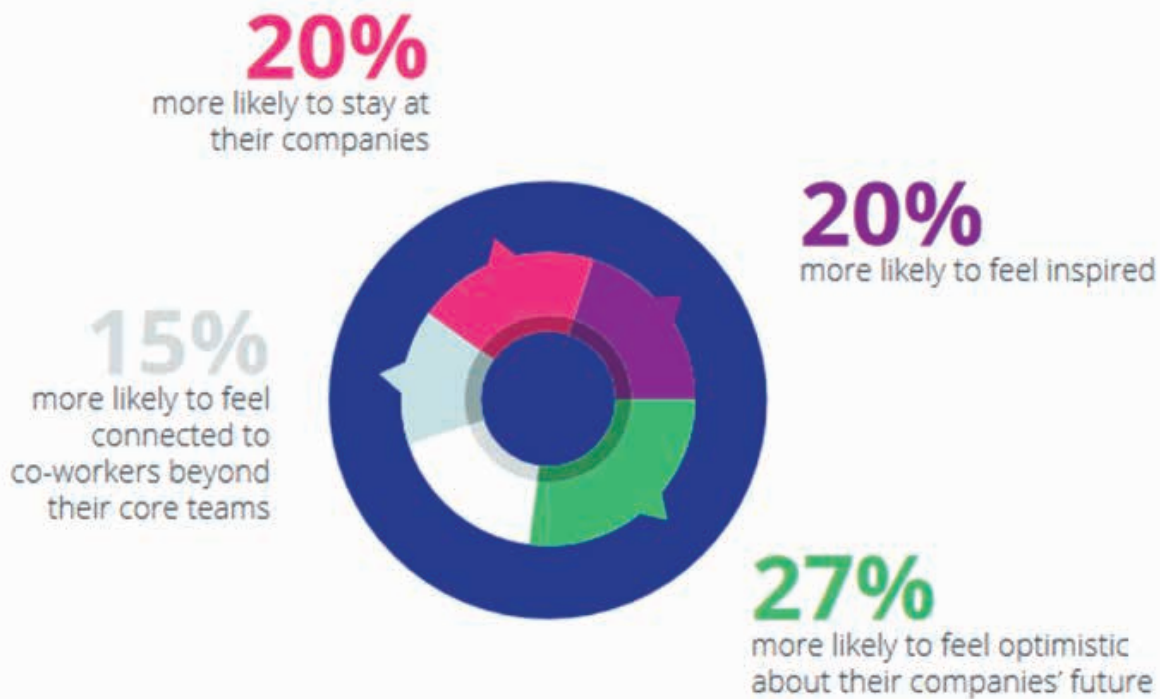
In order to empower your team, you need someone to manage employee activation. Who are your communicators? Who are your most engaged employees right now? Is someone already in a leadership role a good fit?

Determine who your internal activators are. These are the people who can communicate with other employees to make sure everyone is on board with your company's initiatives, to elicit feedback, launch conversations, and answer questions or offer help to other employees.

## Foster Internal Social Engagement

Whether you use a social media platform such as LinkedIn or Facebook Groups, or a specialized app like Smarp or Simpplr, the goal is the same – create and cultivate an internal community.

Employees at socially engaged companies are 20 percent more likely to feel inspired and 27 percent more likely to feel optimistic about the future of their company.



These are the sentiments you want your employees to have. Ultimately, you want a culture that makes them want to be involved and an active part of marketing and business growth.

## Encourage Your Employees To Be Content Creators

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There are two ways you can do this.

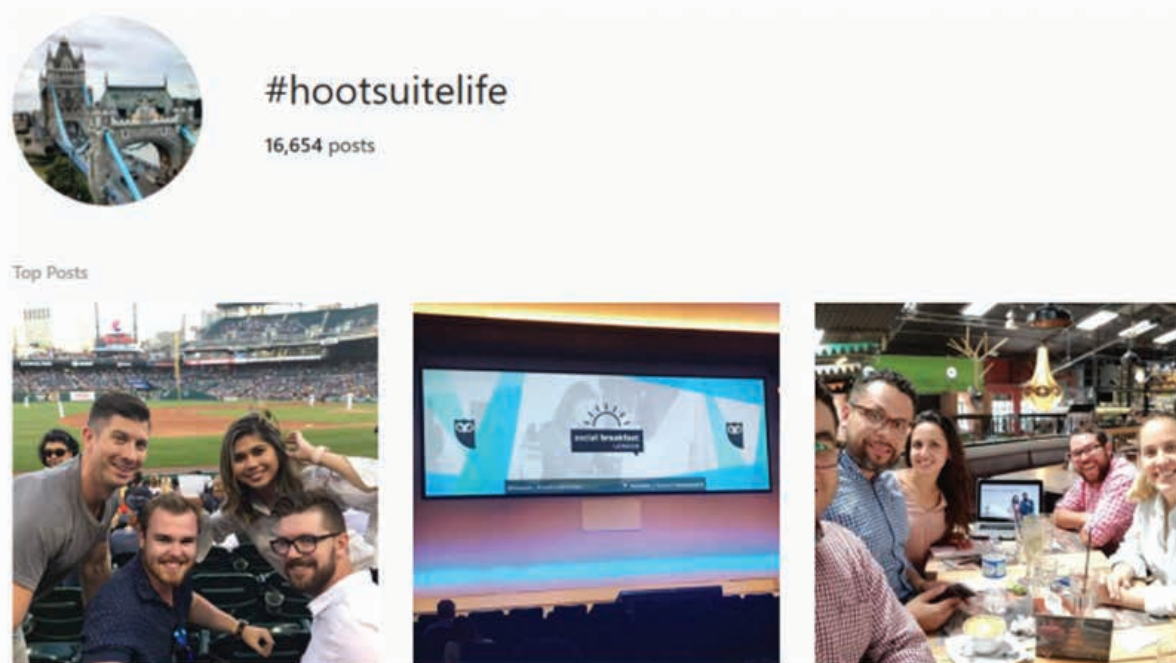
- Bring your internal experts into your content marketing strategy, inviting your employees to create blog articles, video, podcasts, social media posts or other content. This is effective if you have skilled experts on your team who are interested in building their own personal brand. Let them share their insights and experience with your audience, making your brand more relatable. At the same time, it will build up their clout as thought leaders, which benefits them professionally and will reflect positively on your company.
- Your activated employees can also be your content creators for your internal content. The rest of your staff will be more interested in, and more likely to trust, content created by their peers.



## Give Your Employees Platforms

Your employees are more likely to share content as representatives of your brand when you make it easy for them. So, give them a platform. A lot of companies are doing this already, creating employee pages on the company website or through social media.

Take Hootsuite's #HootsuiteLife, for example, a hashtag created to feature the company's employees, or Zappo's dedicated Twitter page for employee sharing, #eyezapp.



When employees have a place to share their own content, whether it's sharing what goes on at work behind-the-scenes, issues that are important to them, or their own expertise, you're giving them the opportunity to be a part of the brand voice and the industry conversation.

## Create Content Employees Want To Share

According to a report by the Marketing Advisory Network, brand messages shared by employees have 561 percent more reach than messages shared solely on the brand's social channels.

To encourage more employee sharing, you've got to have content they want to post on their social channels. Offer a mix of different types of content and you'll see more employee advocacy.

- Content created by other employees or directly by them as an in-house collaborative effort.
- The useful, educational content with infographics, videos, and blog posts – the better the quality, the more likely they'll be interested in sharing it with their friends and followers.
- Content that is aligned with your employees' values – when your brand content speaks to their interests and passions, they're more likely to be active in sharing that content
- Human stories, from what's going on in-house to employee triumphs outside of work – people like to interact with content that puts a human face on a company.

## Gamification For Keeping Activation Going

Gamification is great for keeping employees engaged. It's one thing to activate your employees but keeping them interested and inspired is a whole art form in itself. By using gamification, you can offer real-time rewards and feedback. This is important as employees don't want to feel like they are making an effort for the good of the whole without any recognition.

Gamification doesn't need to play a major role in employee activation – in fact, you don't want to go overboard and make employee advocacy a competition. But, in or-

der to keep employees involved over time, you can inject a sense of newness into your initiatives by using a variety of techniques.

Rewards for the most activity on social media. Leaderboards or badges to recognize effort. You can also use straightforward monetary rewards like a free lunch, coupons, or even cash.

The trick with gamification is not overdoing it. However, your employees are boosting your brand, even with the simple act of sharing a blog post. They deserve a reward!

## Keep Improving With Feedback

Once you get employee activation going within your organization, you want to take a proactive approach to making it better. Even if you see results at the beginning, your team isn't going to magically stay activated.

Keep the conversations going to find out what you can do to better empower your employees – do they want a knowledge base to help them share and create con-

tent? Are they inspired and want to get more involved, creating webinars, setting up demos at industry events, or developing a blog or video series? How can you give them a better platform for sharing their expertise? What ideas do they have?

The best way to keep your employees activated and engaged is to engage them in their own activation.



## THE RIGHT MESSAGING TO GAIN BUY-IN FOR **YOUR EMPLOYEE ACTIVATION PROGRAM**

Companies with engaged employees outperform those without by up to 202 percent. This stat alone should be enough to gain buy-in for an employee activation program.

Even though you and I know your engaged, activated employees are worth their weight in gold, your organization's budget decision makers and managers may need some convincing. After all, we are talking about one of the largest shifts to organizational culture in the 21st century. And, the next evolution in modern marketing.

You'll need the support of upper management for your activation program. Not only to make sure resources are available but also to ensure everyone is on the same page. Employee activation involves more

than a one-off initiative. It's a different way of approaching the relationship between employees and managers, and employees and the brand they work for.

You'll also need employee buy-in. Your company's staff need to know how employee activation benefits them. The thing is, employee activation is a win-win for everyone. Not just because they get a career boost by working for a successful company, but also because becoming a part of the conversation is a way to build their own personal brand and to develop themselves as industry thought leaders.

In order to get the buy-in necessary for sustainable employee activation, here are the key messages you'll want to demonstrate.



## Good Management Matters To Employees More Than Most Think

What's one of the most effective drivers of engagement and a cornerstone for any employee activation program?

Sound employee-manager relationships.

A survey of over 2,000 workers in the US found that:

- 93 percent of employees say trust in their boss is a must for job satisfaction – and most say without job satisfaction, it's pretty hard to put in a lot of effort at work
- 80 percent say they feel they don't even need their boss
- On the other hand, with a good boss, over half say they would do without a 10 percent pay raise to stay with a manager they like

When there is a sense of trust and respect, employees are more likely to stay motivated and to give it their all on the job. This boosts productivity, but it also can translate into business growth.

Highly engaged employees are more likely to act as brand advocates. With a sense of trust and support at work, you're going to see more of your experts sharing branded content, getting involved, and becoming a part of the conversation by creating thought leadership content for the brand.

This won't just give a little juice to your brand's marketing impact. Activating your internal experts has the power to transform it.



## Your Customers (And Future Hires) Listen To Your Employees More Than You Think

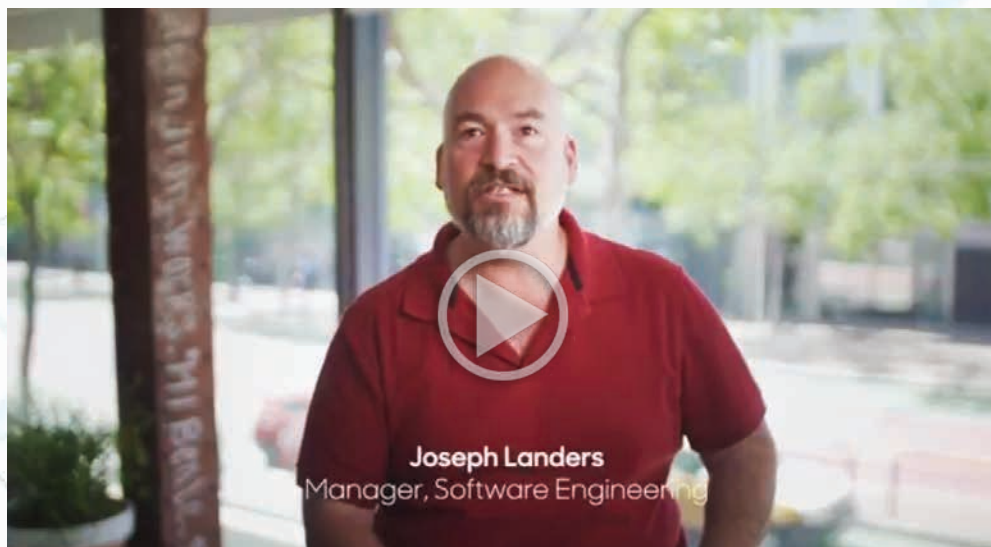
Having happy, engaged employees does lead to happy, engaged customers. Customers are more responsive to content shared and created by your employees than the brand itself or by the CEO. Employee shared content is a version of word-of-mouth marketing – and 84 percent of consumers trust people they know, while only 15 percent trust brands.

Considering the fact that employees, on average, have 10 times more social media connections than the company they work for, simply getting your engaged employees to share brand content can blow the top off of your usual social media engagement numbers. Metrics aside, you'll reach more potential customers, with each message driving more impact because of the greater trust consumers are going to have in the content shared by employees.

Your employees' social posts can:

- Generate 8 times more engagement
- Increase brand awareness by 14 times where it would be with brand-only content

Employee activation is also a powerful tool for attracting top talent. Just look at the hyper-successful brands, like Apple, which features employee quotes and stories on their job website, and Zendesk, which shares videos of current employees to announce the positions they're hiring for. What happens when employees become a part of the recruitment process is they invite talent into a community. It's human, approachable, and really powerful.



## Technology Makes Employee Activation Easier Than You Think

Years ago, marketers believed the heightened personalization and worthwhile customer experience we can deliver today was impossible. But technology changed that. Marketing automation platforms and other AI-driven tools have made it possible to learn more about what customers want and to create a seamless experience across touchpoints.

Technology has evolved what we can do today with employee activation in the same way. Platforms to improve internal commu-

nication, to make it convenient for employees to share content, and custom-created tools have made activation doable – even at the enterprise level.

Take BMW for example. In order to empower their sales workforce with better knowledge about the brand's vehicles and to connect a workforce 125,000 strong, they created the BMW Insiders Platform. It led to a 300 percent increase in branded content shared by employees, helping to boost BMW sales numbers to reach \$1.2 billion in revenue.

*“When our employees are engaged and clearly understand our business, it gives them the feeling that they’re part of something valuable.”*

- Andrew Cutler, BMW's Executive and Internal Communications Manager

## Activation Has More Potential For Them Than Most Employees Realize

But employee activation isn't just about making employees feel like they are part of the brand. It's about helping them develop professionally, and allowing their skills, passion, and expertise to shine out. At the root of employee activation is the understanding that what is good for the individual is good for the whole.

And the whole, as it thrives, is good for the individuals who are a part of it. To get buy-in from employees, let your staff know this isn't just another initiative for the good of the company. It is an opportunity for them.

- Employee activation benefits salespeople – 78 percent of salespeople

- Having a platform to share their expertise is a great way for them to become thought leaders and giving their personal careers a competitive edge

Don't forget to incentivize your employee advocates. They are stepping up to support your brand's image and marketing efforts. Anything from a financial bonus when goals are met to recognition can encourage your employees to get excited about becoming a part of the brand – and industry – conversation.

## Getting Past The Assumptions

A vibrant employee activation program benefits employees, the business itself, and customers. But, ultimately, taking action and demonstrating results will convince even your organization's greatest skeptics. Start small to get employee activation going in your company if you need to, keep getting the right messaging across, and help bring your organization into the future as a successful brand.





## WHY MARKETING SHOULD OWN **CULTURE AND EMPLOYEE MANAGEMENT**

No department understands the idea of change like marketing does. Forced to adopt new technology, upskill like crazy, reshuffle positions and create new roles to manage content marketing, social media marketing, and marketing analytics, marketing has already gone through the ring of fire. I challenge you to find a single CMO or marketing manager who doesn't recognize the dire need for culture change and engagement.

We get it. What a lot of marketing professionals don't understand, however, is why C-suite doesn't.

Blame it on a half-baked approach – Cesare Mainardi of Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management and Paul Leinwand of PwC explain that executive management focuses on reacting to problems rather than creating change. "In these reactive responses, the company leaders avoid the difficult work of developing a better strategy and making the fundamental changes that are needed to build real competitive advantage."

Or, blame it on millennials. Culture change has become linked with making a few changes to attract millennials – more flex

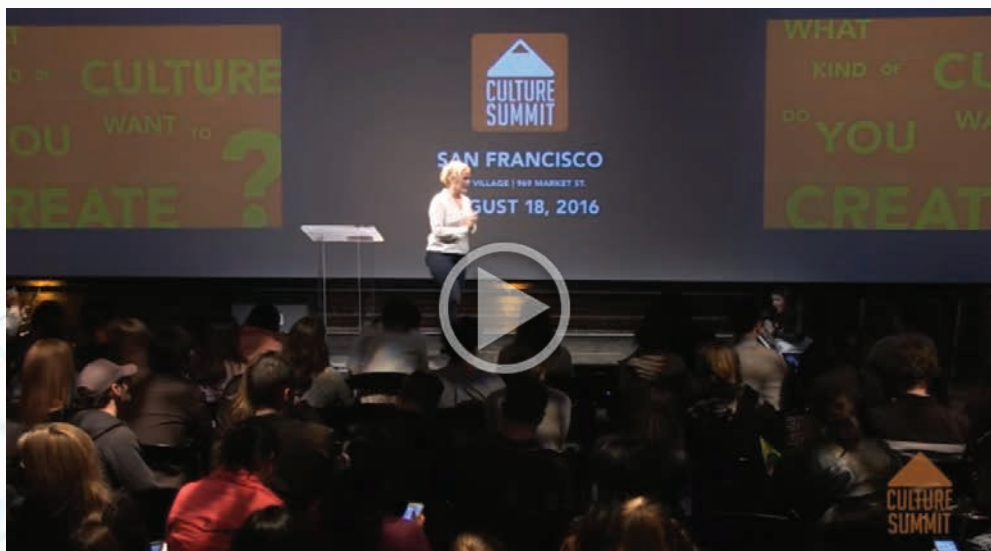
ible work hours, unlimited vacation time, gym perks. Which has totally watered down what culture change actually is. Letting people come to work in jeans and a t-shirt and showing up at 9 is a pretty narrow-minded view of culture change and employee activation.

C-suite is thinking too short-term or too small. Which is where marketing comes in. We think big for a living. Culture change isn't bean bags. It's overhauling internal communications, creating mentorship programs, offering better training for new technology, launching platforms for employee advocacy, giving employees a voice in the brand conversation. It's empowerment and support. It's bringing the best out of each employee, which in turn, brings the best out of the brand.

Whatever you want to blame it on, the fact remains, two out of three change management initiatives fail.

Which isn't just a hiccup in business. It's serious wasted resources, wasted time, and the type of frustration that has led to what HubSpot's Katie Burke calls a "can't do attitude" when it comes to culture.

This is exactly why culture should be in the hands of someone who understands its significance. Marketing professionals understand the urgency, importance, and the complexity of what's involved. They also have the most to gain – the benefits of an activated workforce support the goals of marketing seamlessly. And, getting people energized and motivated about the brand – ahem – that's what marketers do. Translating the practice from motivating and empowering customers to stakeholders isn't a big leap.



## Why Is Culture So Important Right Now?

Cultivating the right organizational culture and engaging employees is going to go down as the 21st century's greatest business challenge. In the wake of the digital era – when the name of the game was to adopt newer technology and move business processes to the digital world – we're doing an about-face. Now that we have a tech-driven business landscape, we're realizing that the real value comes from a tech-driven business landscape driven by human ingenuity.

It's not that we're looking at man vs. machine. It's that businesses need skilled, creative, visionary, and meticulous human brains to operate and create innovative and effective ways to man the ship in this new landscape.

Prometheus just brought us the next generation of fire. We need a new approach to work in order to leverage it.

We also are dealing with a culture shift. Not just from millennials, who do truly want aligned values and to have purpose in their job, but society, in general, has changed. It's a plugged-in world. We're more connected, have easier access to information, and are more in tune to what's going on in business and government. There are fewer walls, less mystique. As a result, from customers to employees, we all expect more.

Businesses need to catch up to these changing trends, both in messaging – how the brand is marketed – and internally – who the brand is. But, culture change continues to be a challenge for most organizations. We are still working with abysmal employee engagement rates – 70 percent of the American workforce isn't engaged.

Which means the potential benefits of an empowered organizational culture are blowing out the window of 70 percent of businesses.



## The Shared Goals Of An Engaged Culture And Management

Here's the thing. Those potential benefits are the same goals on any marketing department's agenda.

### Attracting Top Talent

This has been a huge priority for marketing managers as there are so many new skills and roles to hire for or to upskill your current employees for. We've already been focusing on bringing on top talent in order to fill the data science and tech skills roles and to cope with the changes to marketing from an ad-based form of demand generation to inbound. And a huge chunk of that recruitment effort by marketing has focused on culture change.

### Boosted Brilliance

Marketing could be described as the crossroads of creativity and business. It is the application of strategy and new ideas to achieve business goals. Which is why marketing managers are always adopting ways to squeeze out that creative and strategic brilliance. Just look at the agile movement in marketing today. This is the same reason organizations launch employee engage-

ment programs – for the improved idea sharing, faster innovation, and higher rates of productivity.

### More Authentic Brand Identity

Building brand trust and authority with customers is always one of the top content marketing goals. Culture change has the same aim, just with a focus on employees. The win-win comes from the fact that when your employees are engaged with your brand, they themselves help to build your brand, making your company more appealing to your market. When you evolve your organizational culture, you create an empowering, meaningful environment:

- You can more easily recruit top talent because potential candidates are attracted to more meaningful brands
- Those talented hires become your internal experts, inspired by your leadership and culture, which helps to build your brand's authority
- Your customers trust your brand more because your employees are part of the conversation



## Employee Advocacy

A lot of marketers are catching on to the importance of employee advocacy for marketing. This is also one of the benefits of a culture change. With the right culture, employees are both naturally inspired and well-supported to share content, create content, and become

industry thought leaders – which furthers the reach of your marketing and puts employees in a greater position of value within the company.

## Why Marketing Leaders Are Primed For The Culture Shift

Marketing should own culture and employee engagement not just because they have the most to gain but also because engaging employees is so similar to engaging customers.

Marketing professionals already know how critical authenticity is. They know how to create strategies that will draw people in and keep them engaged. They also know how to deliver the right messaging with content in order to both engage externally for recruitment purposes and internally for em-

ployee activation. Even better, they know how to measure the results.

Burke sums it up well with Hubspot's motto: "Culture is to recruiting as product is to marketing."

Marketers are motivators. Why look outside of the company or try to find solutions within management on how to activate employees and evolve the company culture when this is the marketing department's bread and butter?



## WHEN TO START ACTIVATING YOUR EMPLOYEES FOR MARKETING SUCCESS

When your internal experts become a part of the industry conversation, your audience will pay attention. But, in order to gain this marketing advantage, you need the right climate for activation. You need an engaged team.

Once you do successfully motivate your employees to share branded content, create their own, and to build their reputations as thought leaders in your industry, the sky's the limit. People trust other people more than

the brand itself – it's the inherent potency of word of mouth marketing.

Which for most organizations, is still mostly untapped potential.

But, brands are waking up to the impact activated employees can have on marketing goals – on top of the productivity and recruitment benefits and even the improvement to workplace culture.

## How Employees Can Boost Your Marketing ROI

Today's consumer, from business professionals to everyday buyers, research a company's products or services way before making a purchase decision. That's why being a major player in the conversations going on in your industry is so important.

However, those conversations shouldn't be solely brand-started. Your employees are

consumers. They are the human face of your company and so are more trustworthy in the eyes of your audience. 84 percent of people trust recommendations from people they know over all other types of marketing. According to Edelman's 2018 Trust Barometer, 41 percent of people believe employees rank higher in public trust than the company's CEO, Founder, or PR department.





This is why you want your employees to be starting those industry conversations. Your internal experts then establish their place in the conversation, sharing their insights, sparking questions, providing answers, and becoming recognized experts. Ideally, over time, consumers will look to your employees for solutions.

Not only will this help to drive traffic, customer engagement and conversions, it also transforms your campaign into a team of influencers.





## Is Your Company Ready For Employee Activation?

But, you can't just send out a company memo and have this new marketing superpower.

In fact, if your organization is like most, only a fraction of your employees would be interested in becoming employee advocates. Gallup's 2013 State of the Global Workforce Survey revealed that only 13 percent of employees consider themselves to be engaged.

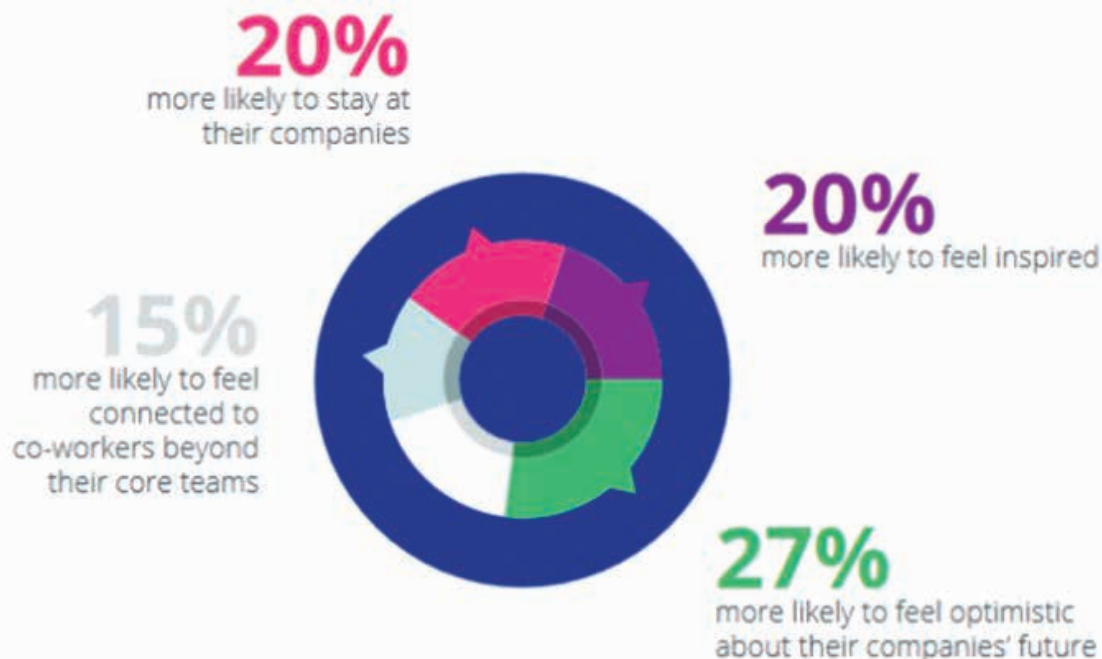
In order to get to a state of employee activation – where your employees are active participants in industry conversations – you've got to inspire engagement first.

Here are three strategies to prime your organization for successful activation:

### Become a Socially Engaged Company

People who work at socially engaged companies are more connected to each other, inspired and optimistic about their company's future.

- Create LinkedIn or Facebook groups for internal conversations
- Use tools to make social sharing easy and engaging
- Provide content that aligns with your employees' interests and values so they are proud to share it with their social networks



## Improve Employee Communications

Often, where engagement falls short or breaks off completely, is in poor communication. You may have a communication network in place but often what happens is the connections aren't, well, connected.

- Your company uses an internal communication platform like Slack or Cliq, but only half of your employees ever use it
- Emails are sent to company email addresses but everyone doesn't have one
- Newsletters are created but are rarely read because they don't speak to your employees' interests
- Content is there to share but employees have to dig to find it

Identify where communication is falling short or isn't streamlined. In order to successfully activate your employees, everyone has to be on the same page. That may mean dwindling communication channels down

to one or two so everyone knows where to look, better onboarding so more people will use team collaboration tools, and ensuring someone is managing communication and can address future shortfalls.

## Prioritize Support and Approachability

In order to activate employees so they'll want to become a part of your brand's marketing strategy, you need to empower them to optimize their potential.

- Check-in on a one-to-one basis to see what each individual needs to do their job and advocate.
- Offer growth opportunities through training and mentorship.
- Make sure managers are accessible and approachable – according to a recent survey conducted by Ultimate Software, 75 percent of employees say approachability is the most important quality their manager should have.

## Give Your Employees A Reason To Be Part Of Your Marketing

To really activate your employees, look at your brand values. The most successful brands have a clear vision that doesn't just guide the brand, it also inspires both your employees and your customers. Apple, Nike, Intel, Burt's Bees – these companies aren't just selling a product or service, they're selling a vision.

Equipping innovators. Empowering athletes. Setting the bar for environmental awareness or corporate social responsibility.

What does your brand do to help society,

a group of people, or to address today's challenges?

According to a 2016 Gallup poll, only 23 percent of US employees feel they can apply their organization's values to their everyday work and just 27 percent would say they believe in their organization's values.

The more meaning and fulfillment your employees get out of their job, the more inspired they will be to further the reach of your brand through social sharing, content creation and conversation.

## Start Activating Your Employees Today

No matter what size your organization or your budget, you should start activating your employees today. In fact, with a team of motivated, activated employees, even a small company can grow because of the organic marketing your employees initiate.

But, to make it really work, start by laying the groundwork for employee activation rather than jumping directly into advocacy. Without a system in place for employees to

share and create, and a reason to participate, your employee activation program won't last very long and you won't get that sustainable boost to your marketing KPIs.

That's the secret to successfully bringing your employees into marketing. You have to look beyond advocacy and aim for activation, unlocking the vast potential of your skilled, passionate, visionary internal experts.



MARKETING  
INSIDER  
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