

**THE COMPLETE GUIDE**

---

# **HOW TO BUILD AN EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY PROGRAM**



**Workshop**

## What is employee advocacy?

Employee advocacy is the public promotion of a company's mission, values, brand, and offerings by the employees themselves. It happens organically, and is likely happening in your organization already, without any formal program in place. However, many companies have discovered the benefits on top of benefits that come from investing time and resources into a more established, company-supported employee advocacy program.

The most visible place to find examples of employee advocacy is on LinkedIn. (To be honest, that entire platform is basically a display of official and unofficial employee advocacy programs.)

Typically, employee advocacy programs focus heavily on social media, but we've also had success branching the program out into offline channels like events, podcasts, and community-based initiatives.



# Why should I build an employee advocacy program?

There is a long, long list of benefits that stretches across multiple departments (and ultimately, it lifts the entire company up as a whole).

## **For marketing teams:**

An employee advocacy program can help to increase the reach of your marketing messages and content, bolster the brand's reputation, and build trust among a target market.

In particular, the days of seeing huge success with the company's social media account are dwindling. In fact, according to a study by Cisco, employee posts on social media can generate 8X more engagement than when that *exact* same content is shared through a brand handle. And for most companies, their employees' networks are far greater than their brand handles (upwards of 10x in some cases).

The trends are clear: customers and prospects want to engage with experts and with people, not with the brand's Twitter account.

*Here's a quick list of the other benefits for marketing teams:*

- Increase brand awareness and engagement on social media (including platforms the 'brand' may not be on, like Reddit or TikTok)
- Improve brand recognition and loyalty
- Create more cohesive and consistent messaging on employee social accounts
- Free advertising (On average, an employee advocacy program involving 1,000 active participants can generate \$1,900,000 in advertising value, based on an Employee Advocacy Study at Kredible.)
- Discover brand messages that resonate with your target audience
- Generate organic leads and interest for the sales team



### For HR and people teams:

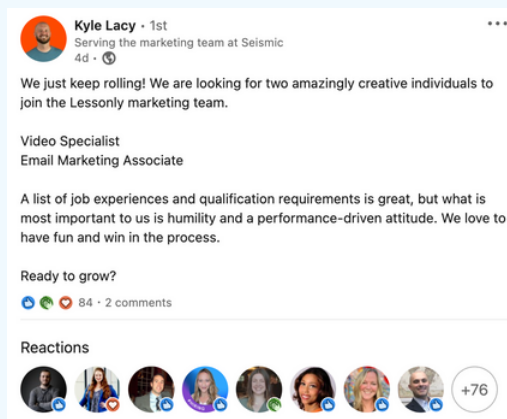
An employee advocacy program is a powerful force for increasing both talent acquisition and retention. For potential candidates, they'll be able to see a network of employees that are visibly proud of their work, not to mention the pure brand reach alone. (Candidates are 40% more likely to put in an application if they are familiar with the company brand, according to a recent Glassdoor report.)

For existing employees, they'll be reminded why they enjoy the organization they work for and have a public platform to celebrate each other's successes.

It's also a place where employees can be free to use their unique voice and establish themselves as thought leaders and experts in a particular role or industry (and know that the company is behind them 100% and encouraging that growth).

Here are a few more benefits for HR teams:

- Drive employee referrals for open positions
- Attract a wider, more diverse group of candidates to your open roles
- Lower your cost per hire and shorten the hiring cycle
- Boost retention rates
- Capture engaging stories for internal materials and recruiting campaigns
- Grow and scale your employer brand
- "Show, don't tell" why your organization is a great place to work



*Candidates are 40% more likely to put in an application if they are familiar with the company*

**For sales teams:**

Most top-tier salespeople have discovered this on their own, and are likely doing a bit of social media-based employee advocacy with or without your influence. The data has been there to back it for years: according to 2013's Social Media and Sales Quota Survey, 72% of salespeople using social media as part of their sales process outperformed their peers and exceeded quota 23% more often.

Here are a few more benefits for sales teams:

- Generate new opportunities
- Build trust with your prospects
- Humanize your sales pitches
- Become a thought leader in the industry and grow your own skillset
- Close deals faster (According to Fast Company, leads developed through employee social marketing convert 7 times more frequently than other leads.)
- Get a better understanding of what messaging and features resonate
- Create a better balance of give-and-take on social media (so cold prospects are more likely to respond)



## Can any company build this program?

Before you build an employee advocacy program, you need four things:

1. Good employee engagement
2. A transparent culture built on trust and freedom
3. A strong cadence for internal marketing and communications
4. Someone to lead it

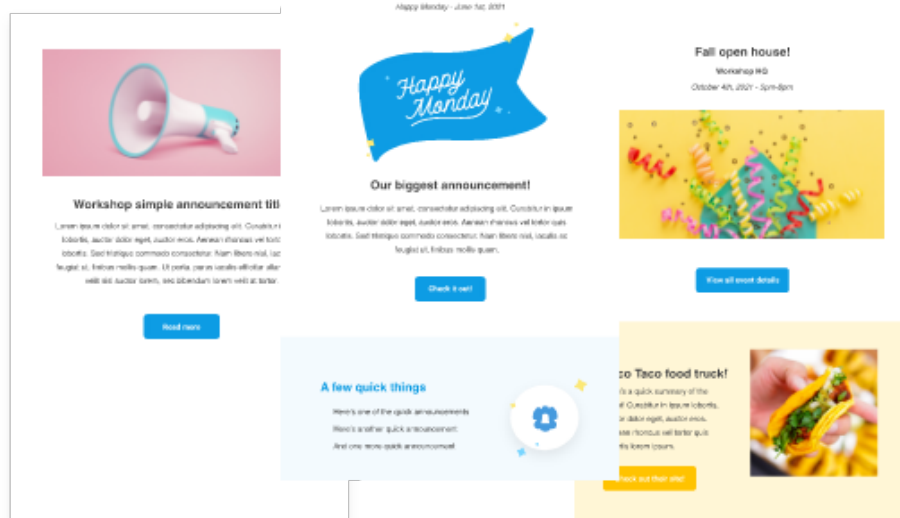
*Here's why:*

**You need good employee engagement** because the very core of an employee advocacy program is pride in the organization they work for. If you're encouraging your teams to share information and details about the company on social media, you want to be pretty certain that their emotions towards the organization are overwhelmingly positive. That, and it can't be forced or mandated...so you have to have that strong foundation of employee engagement.

**You need a transparent culture built on trust and freedom** because employee advocacy can't be bought or forced on employees; the authenticity needs to shine through, and it needs to be completely voluntary. Not only that, but you want your teams and people to take the messages and content you've given them and make it into their own. Your employees will be creating their own version of the content (photography, video, social posts, etc), and that creativity and originality is what makes the effort so successful. It'll bring the "human element" and put a face to the brand, which is exactly what people want to see and interact with on- and offline.

**You need a strong cadence for internal content marketing and communications** because building an employee advocacy program doesn't happen overnight. You need to be creating a stream of positive, engaging content to get them bought in and encourage them to start sharing it.

The best place to create that content is with [Workshop](#). It's an internal marketing platform for creating beautifully branded, employee-specific campaigns. It replaces any internal email tool you have and integrates with the other communication channels your team uses the most (including Slack, SMS, and Microsoft Teams).



**You need someone to lead it** because this program has to be sustainable and designed to last. After all, if your employee advocacy program doesn't have an employee advocate, it's definitely doomed to fail.

Can you build an employee advocacy program without those four things? You can sure try, but it's unlikely to be successful (and, in fact, could potentially harm your brand).

If you're worried about privacy or potential legal ramifications (and you're not alone in that), it's important that you create a social media policy and train your teams on what they should/shouldn't share on social media (more on that later). It's important to give your team the guidelines they need to do it well, and avoid anything that's a potential risk to the employee or the company (like sharing private customer data, violating HIPAA, etc.)

## Internal marketing + employee advocacy

*Internal marketing* is the promotion of the company internally to the people who work there.

*Employee advocacy* is the promotion of the company externally by the people who work there.

Internal marketing encompasses everything that an organization needs to communicate to its people: the mission, values, objectives, brand, programs, products, services, events, and more.

You can't have one without the other. Your team won't advocate for you externally if they're uninformed, uninspired, disconnected, or just disinterested. However, if you've been taking the time to thoughtfully create content, communications, and campaigns that are employee-oriented, you can create the same feelings of brand loyalty and generate all the desired network effects.



Often, you'll see both of these concepts work hand-in-hand; your employees will often share work-specific events, swag, new product/services launches, and more.

***Here are a few of our favorite examples:***

- A group of multiple employees actively engaging in thought leadership on LinkedIn
  - [Refine Labs](#)
  - [Chili Piper](#)
  - [Riskalyze](#)
  - [Blue Cross Blue Shield](#)
- A culture-focused hashtag, dedicated social media profile, microsite, or blog post series
  - [Marriott Careers](#)
  - [#lifeatcapitalone](#)
  - [Target](#)
- An employee-only conference, retreat, or offsite
  - [Bridgeable Day](#)
  - [Flywheel's Flyfest](#) *(we created this one!)*
  - [Slido's hybrid offsite](#)
- Employee-specific celebrations and gifts (like for anniversaries, promotions, or new product launches)
- And maybe the most well-known example of the [Sherwin-Williams employee who was fired for his TikTok account](#) (huge mistake on the company's part)

We've pulled a bunch of miscellaneous examples in a little gallery on the next page, as well.

**Michael Struthers** • 1st  
People > Process  
31m • 📷

So cool seeing what the PetFriendly team comes up with! Such a creative crew.

#omahajobs #startup #creative #team #petfriendly



**Steve Isom** • 1st  
Chief Financial Officer at Bloomerang  
5h • 📷

Started the wellness day off by proving to my wife that I could get the kids to school on time by myself... maybe ONE minute late 🙄. Proud to work at a company that prioritizes mental health... although my day has definitely already been more stressful!

**Bloomerang**  
Wellness • 4,934 followers  
23h • 📷

We talk a lot about the importance of self-care among nonprofit professionals, so we thought it was time to practice what we preach.

Tomorrow we're closing our offices to give Bloomerang employees a day off to rest and recharge.

Happy employees = happy customers. See you all on Monday!

👍 29 • 3 comments

**Kate Willoughby** • 1st  
@Kburton88

Proud to work in such fabulous department  
**@PharmacyHHFT**

#pharmacy #teampharmacy

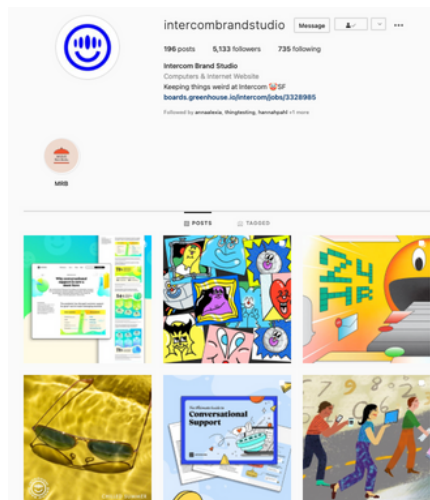


**Camilla McDonald** • 3rd •  
Passionate about making a difference to organisations and their people...  
1d • 📷

I'm delighted to announce that I've got a new job and started last Monday 4th October at 5.20pm when our baby son Cal Oscar Griffith was born. I've been after this job for a while now so I continue to pinch myself that this is real. We feel truly blessed. I remain passionate about global client management and Mercer where I can thrive and learn new things every day BUT for the next year I will be mastering this, my dream job - motherhood.

Already my new job has called for rapid upskilling, experimentation, resilience, patience, perseverance, and phenomenal team work between **Mark Griffith** and me. We are loving every minute. I'm sure we won't love every minute to come but our love for this little miracle is already boundless.

What will the world of work look like for Cal when he enters it (in c. 2040)? and what should we be doing now to shape his future...?



**Sue Petersen (She/Her)** • 1st  
Executive Vice President of Inclusion, Diversity and People at Noodles...  
4h • 📷

I love Kelli's story. We are so fortunate to have her and so many other talent individuals in the Noodles Family! Come join an amazing team and watch your career blossom! #career #talent



**Dusty Davidson** Retweeted  
**Jess Spangler** @spangler\_jess

At @useworkshop we've been discussing the idea of making every email a great employee experience.

I've threaded two ideas but would love to hear how others make email a great #EmployeeExperience

7:51 AM · Sep 28, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

2 Retweets 2 Likes

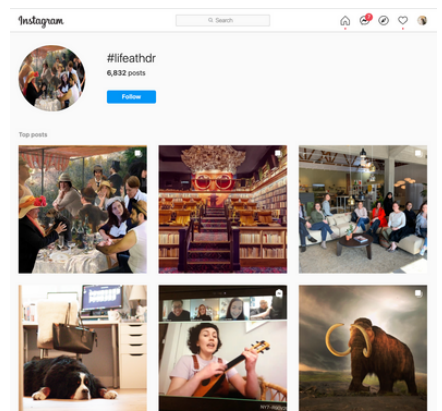
**Jamie Bell**  
VP of Marketing at Workshop | Making every email a great employee ex...  
3d • 📷

If you're getting tired of reading a seemingly endless onslaught of negative, demoralizing, burnout-inducing articles about the workplace, I've got a place for you!

The Happy Monday Club is a short, positive, practical newsletter we send out every Monday to help you build an engaging employee experience and internal brand. We include actionable templates, little surprises/GIFs, and a curated list of company news with an optimistic spin.

It's for all of us who are actively working to transform the organizations we are a part of into bigger, better, brighter places to work.

Check it out + join us! Link's in the comments.



**Drew Hoffmeyer** • 2nd  
Video & Multimedia Manager at Carson Group  
4h • 📷

Onboarding week2 at **Carson Group**: Inspiring talks from President Bush, casually walking onto the Raiders field, meeting tons of genuine people who are passionate about their careers. Great job marketing team! Great time! #excell2021



**Derek Homann** @dhomann · Sep 20

We pull names of new subscribers every week to win one of these sweet shirts too.

I'm rocking mine right now!



**Workshop** @useworkshop · Sep 20

Start your week off right! 🌞

# What do I need to launch this program?

You may have heard about employee advocacy software and robust systems for aggregating social media data or measuring “impressions,” but we’re not going to recommend that here.

You can launch an employee advocacy program with just a few things:

- Metrics for success (and a way to measure them)
- A social media policy
- Assets for your employees
- An internal content marketing strategy
- Social media training materials
- (Optional) A budget!

## ***Metrics for success (and a way to measure them)***

Sure, you can opt for a specially crafted software solution built specifically for tracking and measuring employee advocacy — in fact, [here's a list of them!](#) If you're in a massive organization and/or your program has truly become that sophisticated, it could certainly be of benefit.

However, we've found that you don't need anything that robust to get started; just align your employee advocacy program to one or more of your company's current goals. It can be tied to one department or to multiple.

For example: if you're looking to decrease your attrition rate, run a pilot of your employee advocacy with a select group of team members. After three months, measure the retention rate of those who were in the program with a similar sample of those who were not.



Whatever it may be, just have some kind of guidelines of how you're going to measure the success of the program (we've included a few ideas at the end of this guide).

Personally, we've experienced a *lot* of success even with just measuring the program more qualitatively; you'll find that the senior leadership team (and even the CEO) will be impressed with the stories and engagement that results from the program, and not simply the numbers.

### ***A social media policy***

If you're going to actively encourage your employees to use social media to promote work-related content, then a social media policy is an absolute must-have. It's great to have that set of guidelines all written out so that your team feels confident in creating their own content, and your leadership team feels comfortable with giving them a bit of creative license.

### ***Assets for your employees***

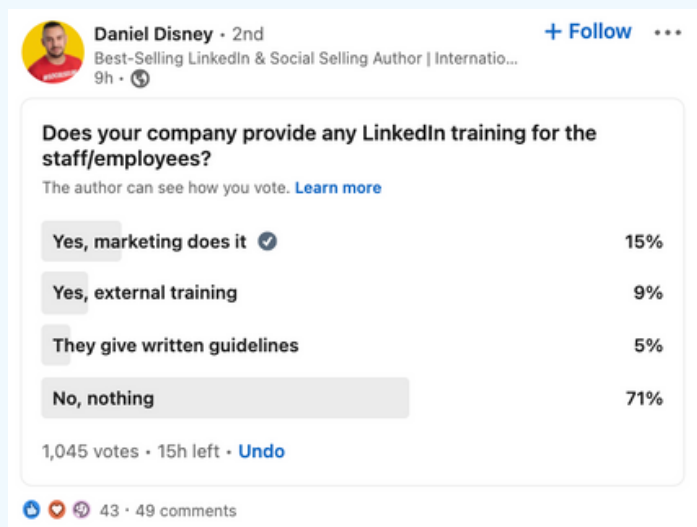
To create brand consistency, it's best to create a set of pre-approved graphics and materials for your team to share. Consider things like LinkedIn or Twitter covers, professional headshots, anniversary templates, company logos, product screenshots, etc.

### ***An internal marketing strategy***

Your organization needs to be regularly sharing company news, highlighting employee stories, and notifying the team of available job openings. After all: the easiest way to get employees to share company information is to make it easy for *them* to share. Aggregate the relevant and latest information, and send it to them on a regular basis.



The most basic way is via email; you can do this very easily in Workshop with a well-designed newsletter, and attach any graphics they can use. We also use Workshop for both internal marketing *and* employee advocacy; meaning that we provide clear indicators on employee-facing content that a particular piece of news is shareable externally.



*Most companies aren't providing any LinkedIn training for employees, so this is a \*huge\* opportunity to compete for talent and build your advocacy program quickly!*

### ***Social media training materials***

There's likely a portion of your team who aren't advocating for your company on social media because they either 1.) aren't sure that they are allowed to or 2.) have no idea what to share in the first place. You can spur these potential team members on by providing them with some light social media training. Highlight examples of posts from other employees that they can use as references, or provide short training sessions on specific social media channels (like LinkedIn or Twitter). Be sure to include FAQs and walk through any policies that remind them of what kinds of posts to *avoid*, as well. And, while we don't recommend 'pre-screening' employee posts, it's always nice to give them a person to contact or turn to if they're uncertain or are looking for a little extra guidance.

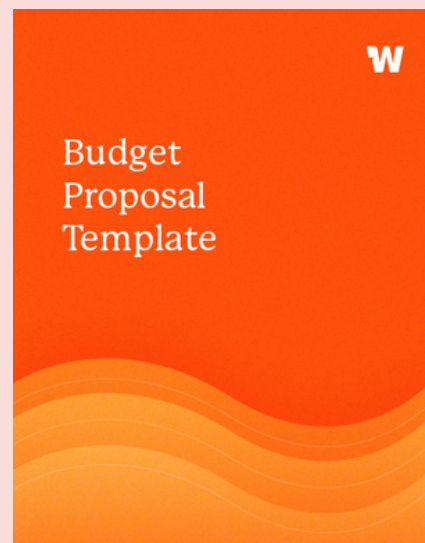
### ***A budget (optional!)***

You don't necessarily \*need\* a budget to launch an impactful employee advocacy program; in fact, it might complicate things out of the gate. However, you may want to launch other related initiatives that naturally generate a lot of employee buzz on social media, like new hire onboarding swag, surprise events, or anniversary gifts for employees.

Although it may overlap with a professional development or employee recognition budget, we've also used employee advocacy program funds to cover the costs of speaker fees at conferences, additional training programs, employee-only events, membership fees for professional organizations, or company awards.

With a budget, you can also potentially 'gamify' the program a bit as you scale it. Some programs see success by offering rewards or challenges to generate extra participation or excitement...but again, this can be a fine line to walk. You want to make sure that the bulk of your advocacy program feels organic, and not as if you're bribing the team to say nice things about the company in public.

***Need a budget proposal template?***  
*Here's one you can use!*



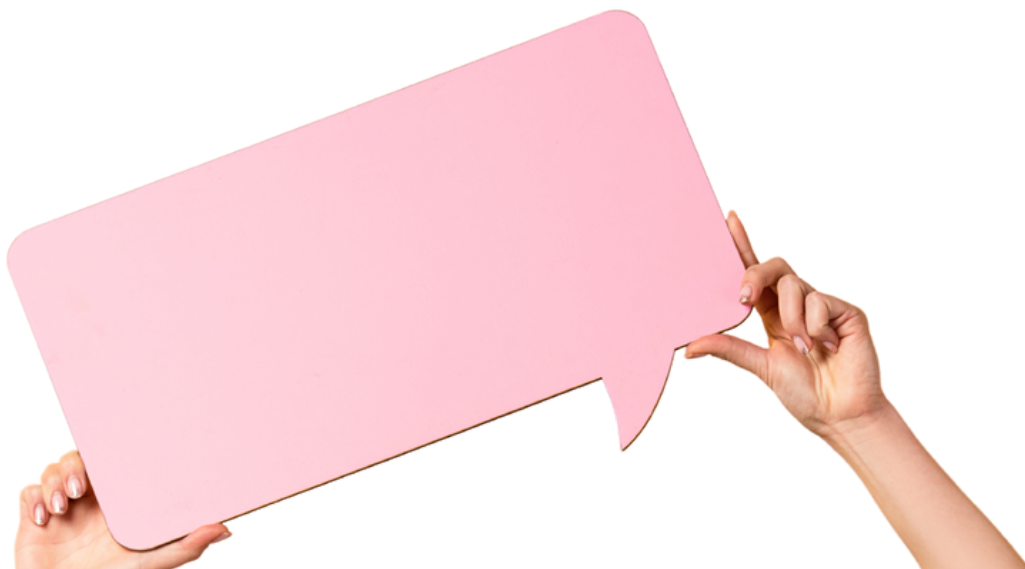
## How do I roll this out to the company?

If you've got your foundation laid out, launching an employee advocacy program is pretty easy. We've found the most success by rolling it out in four phases: find your champions, create a few quick wins, announce a company-wide launch, and incorporate it as an ongoing part of your employee onboarding and training.

### ***Phase 1: Find your champions***

We guarantee that a huge portion of your team is already active on social media. Dig in and do some research on LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, etc. and see which employees are either 1.) already talking about their work or the company on social media or 2.) have a large following and a personal brand that could be of benefit to your employee advocacy program. These could also be individuals who are active in particular communities or are often asked to speak at events.

From there, work with those champions (you can even consider them a formal or informal committee) to develop and refine your program. We find that if the program feels like it's coming from marketing or corporate or the leadership team, it's harder for it to feel organic.



## ***Phase 2: Run a pilot***

Before you roll out a company-wide launch, it can be smart to generate attention and demonstrate results quickly with a small pilot group. Remember: this program doesn't exist solely for the marketing, sales, or HR teams. It can truly be a path for growth and recognition for any employee.

Work with your champions and select a small group of team members (maybe 5-10 or so) who would be great advocates, but who haven't necessarily developed the skillset or taken the initiative yet to do this on their own. They can be from any part of the organization, from the CEO to a frontline worker. Work with those employees individually to figure out where their natural talents lie and come up with a creative strategy for how they could promote a specific part of the company's culture. Done well, it's a great way to help them see how they can use social media for thought leadership, to become more successful in their work, and as a way to further their career.

*For example:*

- Are they comfortable on video? Maybe they should post short clips to LinkedIn or create a YouTube tutorial.
- Are they an incredible designer? Perhaps they should create an Instagram account for the design team or create icons for each of your company's 2022 goals.
- Are they short on time but big on personality? Maybe you should encourage them to speak at an upcoming local event or help the marketing team create content for a TikTok account.

Truthfully, though, you don't have to do any of this on a recurring basis; you may have employees that have one or two creative ideas they want to help with, and aren't interested in an ongoing commitment.

Throughout this process, you'll also be able to see where your team members may need the most support and training, which will help you better prep for the next two steps.



### ***Phase 3: Company-wide launch***

Now it's time to let the entire organization in on the secret and formally launch your employee advocacy program. Again, bring in those champions and share any early successes you've had; don't just make the launch "from the higher-ups."

A few other things to consider:

- Think of branding the program itself; so-and-so's employee advocacy program is a pretty transparent and uninspiring message.
- This might be obvious, but the launch of your employee advocacy program should only be internal. Even though you're providing a lot of support behind-the-scenes, you want it to feel as organic as possible for the general public.
- A successful employee advocacy program doesn't require 100% of your employees to participate, 100% of the time. (Of course, the more dedicated people you have, the better it'll be.)

Not every employee will be a fit. You'll have team members who don't want to mix their personal social media accounts with their professional lives. That's completely understandable, very common, and should be respected.

### ***Phase 4: Ongoing onboarding and training***

A great way to ensure your program is consistently successful is to make social media training a part of your company's onboarding process with new hires. Continue to refine the materials and structure of the program based on what works.



## How do I track the success of the program?

As we mentioned earlier, an employee advocacy program works best if its aligned to the company's goals; and done well, you'll see a lift in many areas of the business.

Quantitatively, there are a few measurements you can consider tracking to prove the ROI of the program.

**Active participation rate:** What percentage of all employees are engaged and sharing company content? What was it before the program launched, and what was it after?

**Top contributors and posts:** Who are the employees who share the most often? What posts are receiving the most engagement?

**Website traffic from social media:** You can easily track this in Google Analytics to see a general lift and increase in traffic from social media channels in general.

**LinkedIn's native Employee Advocacy analytics:** LinkedIn provides page admins of a LinkedIn Page with a bunch of analytics to gauge trends in employee and member engagement. [Here's how to find that data.](#)

**Growth of individual social media accounts:** Each of your participants can provide you with data on their follower growth, reach, and engagement.



**Traffic from UTM codes:** You can create a UTM code for each employee who wants to participate in the program and track traffic from them individually.

**Leads originating from social media:** You should be able to track this in your CRM.

**Employee referrals:** A solid one for recruiting that's more directly correlated to the program.

We don't recommend using any reach or impression metrics; they can feel abstract, over-inflated, and most leadership teams and employees won't understand what they mean.

Outside of the hard numbers, use every opportunity you can to highlight what the program is doing well. Reshare employee content from the company's social media accounts, highlight successes at all-hands meetings, and celebrate employees with particularly high-performing posts, and recognize your team members simply for putting themselves out there.



**Questions? Comments?**

Reach out to our VP of Marketing, Jamie Bell, if you have any follow-up questions or want additional advice on how to build an employee advocacy program for your organization!

[Email](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[Twitter](#)

**Workshop**