

BRANDING

Recruiting Employees -- and Their Friends -- to Market Your Brand



Image credit: The British Council



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In the digital economy, the task of building a company's brand is more complicated than ever. Unlike the 20th century, where advertising and marketing events defined and differentiated brands in the consumer minds, 21st century companies must compete in real-time among a sea of voices constantly fighting for attention from their audience.

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When that audience is constantly bombarded with messages from other marketers, it is easy for one company's message to get lost in the mix or to be ignored entirely.

Buying engagement is not the answer. While purchasing promoted ads on social properties may yield some impact, the process can become expensive, and the relationships ads generate are comparable to nothing more than a "warm call," if not a cold call, among online shoppers and social networkers.

Research shows that people are more likely to engage with a brand that's been recommended by someone in their networks. A study by the Ciceron brand advocacy firm found that 77 percent of consumers surveyed said they were more likely to buy a product when they heard about it from someone they trusted.

The study also found that the "share rate" of content among those surveyed was eight times greater when that content was posted by employees than when it was posted by a company's brand page.

That makes sense: Content from personal connections is vetted by those with whom the consumer already shares

a common interest, history, geography, occupation or other factor, making it more likely that the consumer will read information that is interesting or relevant to him or her.

So, how can a business that aspires to lead its sector rise above the chatter? The answer is right in front of you --your employees.

Below are four ways to turn your employees into brand advocates.

1. Create a quality product/service and work environment that employees want to support.

Employees who are proud of their company's product or service are more likely to share it with their friends. Moreover, happy employees who are actively engaged with their work and want to support their employer are also more likely to become brand ambassadors.

2. Make it easy.

While employees may want to become brand ambassadors, they may not know how, or not want to expend the time to share content. Creating a content hub with links to articles, suggested messaging and relevant hashtags and handles will remove obstacles that may have otherwise deterred employees from acting on the company's behalf.

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3. Make it relevant to them.

Staffers with strong social media skills will benefit both professionally and personally, so take the time to educate your employees on the basics of popular social media sites. Demonstrate how proficiency there will enhance their professional skill sets and showcase their own industry knowledge. Show them how to participate in online conversations or LinkedIn groups, or simply to add links to their email signatures.

4. Make it fun.

Provide incentives to encourage employees to become brand ambassadors. Examples could include rewards for employees who receive the most “likes” or “favorites” when promoting the company’s content. These could also include prizes for those whose links receive the most clicks. At Airfoil, our employees work together to reach a targeted number of social mentions to receive shorter “Summer Friday” workdays.

Whatever the method, the significance is clear: Employee advocacy equals increased reach, increased engagement and an overall positive impact on a company’s SEO, website traffic and bottom line.

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