

Employee Advocacy: 4 Ways to Utilize Your Greatest Promoters

Treat your employees right, and they'll reward you with hard work and loyalty. And that loyalty can be a huge asset for your business — for one reason you might not have thought of. Potentially, your loyal employees could be some of the most qualified people to help market your company.

Why should you use your employees as brand advocates? Here are [five reasons this strategy can work for your small business](#):

- Employees are consumers.
- They're right there on the front lines.
- If they believe in your product, they'll help you sell it.
- It gives your brand a "human face."
- Employees contribute unique, usable ideas.

Nobody knows your company better than the people who represent your brand every day. And they naturally have a vested interest in helping you create a successful business — so getting them involved provides a unique and creative angle for your marketing efforts.

Employee advocacy is a scalable yet underutilized strategy that can help you gain social traction in today's increasingly competitive marketplace.

It's proven to work

There's plenty of data to support this concept:

- A [Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey](#) found that as many as 90% of consumers trust recommendations from people they know.
- [Brand advocates](#) have an average of 200 to 450 people in their social networks, and they recommend an average of nine brands in one year.
- Of all U.S. online consumers, [32 percent would trust a stranger's opinion on public forums and blogs](#) more than they would trust branded advertisements.
- 49% of people trust a company's employees to provide them with credible and honest information, [according to a study done by Edelman](#).

Four ways to get them involved

To start using employee advocacy in your marketing efforts, try these methods:

- **Word of mouth.** Generating positive marketing by word of mouth starts with empowering your employees. Create a company culture that engages and

supports. Employees who are passionate about what they do can't help but share their excitement with friends and family. You can even offer them referral incentives for bringing in new customers.

- **Social media.** It's proven to work since [the average brand advocate's social network includes 200 to 450 people](#), encourage your employees to promote your business online. They might share company news, job listings, multimedia and other relevant content on social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Pinterest.

It might be helpful to develop a company policy on social media, and provide training to educate employees on proper strategic usage — but leave room for creativity, too. This should be a fun way for people to promote a business that they care about.

- **Traditional advertising.** Make your employees the stars in print ads and commercials — it's a great way to promote your company by using the people who create the brand experience every day. [About half of consumers trust employees to give them honest and credible information](#). Let your employees shine as passionate brand advocates to promote connections and increase your likability.
- **Product development.** Another idea — hold regular meetings to encourage employees to share their product development ideas. Allowing team members to be involved in the early stages can help foster a sense of pride and ownership. Your employees may have ideas that could produce valuable innovations for your small business.

The bottom line is: Your employees know your company inside and out. They know your products and services. They know what your customers want. And best of all, they have a vested interest in helping your company grow — which benefits all of you.

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