

EBOOK

Communicating the ROI of Employee Advocacy



Communicating the ROI of Employee Advocacy

Why You Should Invest in
an Employee Advocacy
Program

Table of contents

Introduction	4
Take your internal communications to the next level with an internal content hub.....	6
Increase your marketing ROI with an employee advocacy program.....	8
Boost your sales by empowering your employees on social media.....	18
Improve your social recruiting strategy to attract the right talent.....	26
Measure your employee advocacy success.....	32
Conclusion.....	33

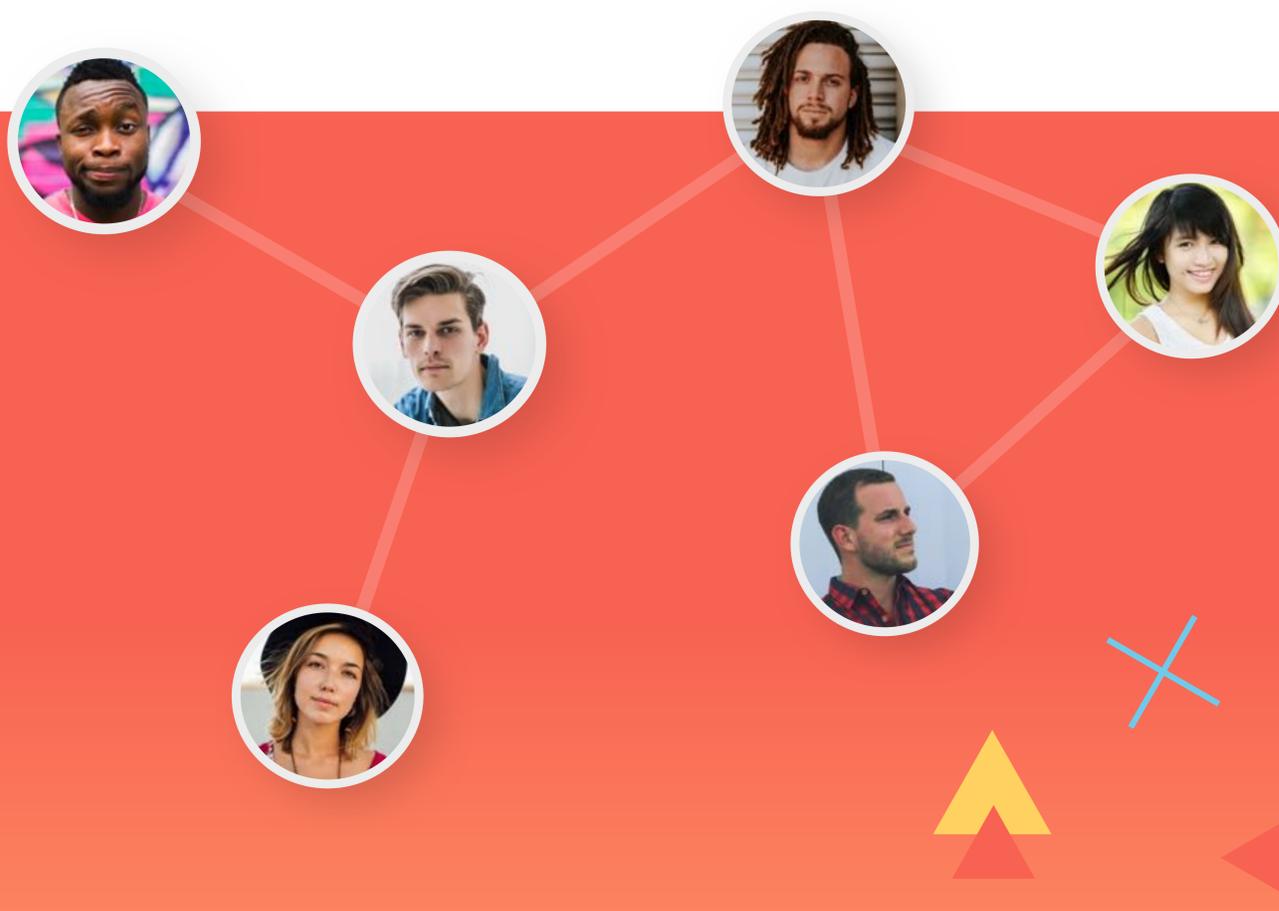
Introduction

A successful employee advocacy program is supported from the top

So you have heard of employee advocacy and you are aware of the benefits:

- Builds a shared sense of purpose
- Fosters employee creativity
- Increases employee engagement in the workplace
- Boosts company visibility and brand awareness
- Decreases the costs of advertising and marketing
- Increases website traffic
- Improves customer service
- Increases sales conversion rates
- Accelerates the sales cycle
- Improves brand loyalty and trust
- Creates customer advocates
- Turns engaged employees into brand advocates
- Helps attract top talent

Essentially, employee advocacy inspires employees across the company to rally around a common cause and amplify your brand messaging.



Introduction

But only if employees and executives embrace the idea. Successful employee advocacy programs require management support, which trickles down and across the company.

Adoption rates increase dramatically when executives buy-in and participate in an employee advocacy program. The program grows, generates momentum and produces positive results in internal communications, marketing, sales, HR and beyond.

You probably know what to expect when you sit down to have that conversation about employee advocacy. You'll be asking for resources, a substantial investment of time and money. So the questions you'll field will be about time and money too.

The executives will want to not only learn more about the benefits, but see a comprehensive plan with objectives, metrics and a clear strategy to achieve a high ROI. The guide you're reading now should give you what you need to make a persuasive business case for employee advocacy.

“The guide you’re reading now should give you what you need to make a persuasive business case for employee advocacy.”

Take your internal communications to the next level with an internal content hub

A key to improving productivity in the workplace

Here's a sobering statistic from IDC: The knowledge worker spends about 2.5 hours per day, or roughly 30% of their time at work, searching for information.

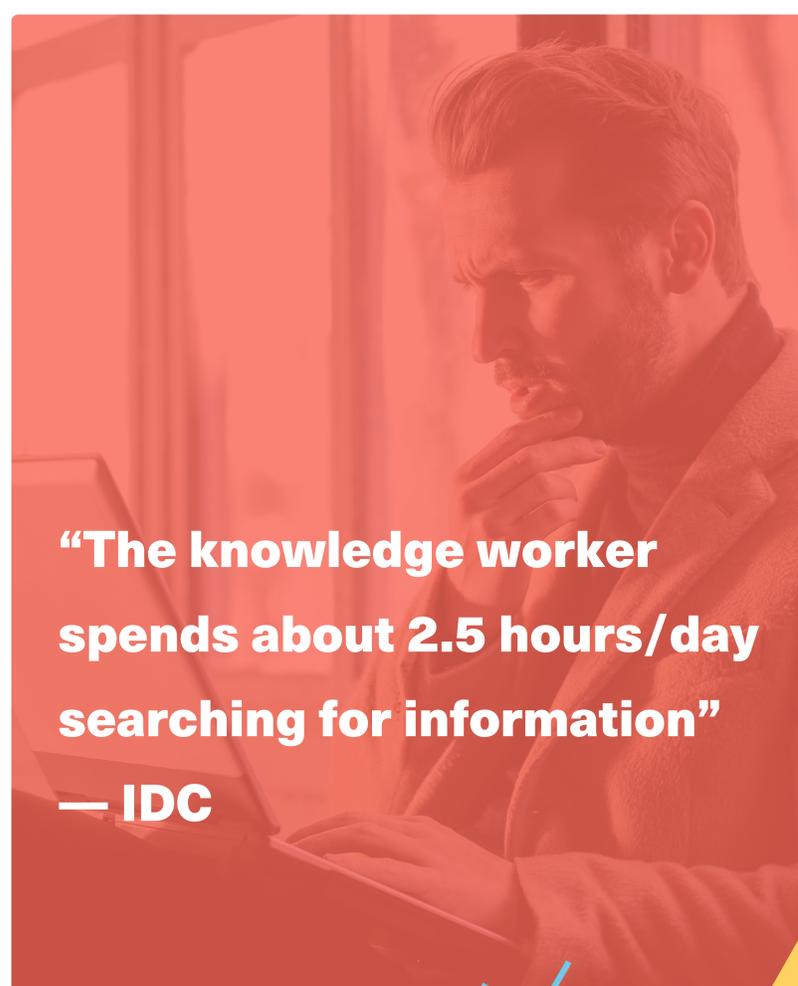
Companies that realize the painful costs of this problem create a culture to foster knowledge sharing and internal communications. They make sure that the right content finds the right employee at the right time so that they can be more productive and efficient.

Efficient internal communication occurs when employees are easily able to find the right information at the right time. This creates opportunities to:

- **Boost innovation**
- **Avoid mistakes at work**
- **Reduce errors**
- **Improve collaboration**
- **Motivate employees**
- **Accelerate learning**
- **Create professional growth**

There are three powerful catalysts of internal communications, which link closely to employee advocacy. Your company must:

- **Have a content hub that is up-to-date and easy to navigate and manage.**
- **Assign people to be in charge of content and information management and distribution.**
- **Ensure all employees are familiar with your knowledge management system.**



Take your internal communications to the next level with an internal content hub

Create a culture of knowledge sharing

After gaining executive support, you'll want to motivate employees across the company to share knowledge. Here's how:

- **Present the benefits**
- **Encourage learning**
- **Gamify experiences**
- **Recognize and reward cooperation and performance**



ROI alert

The rewards of knowledge sharing tend to be less tangible than benefits of employee advocacy, but your employees are bound to enjoy many positive effects. They're likely to feel a sense of:

- **Belonging at work**
- **Bond with co-workers**
- **Achievement and success**
- **Respect and trust**

Increase your marketing ROI with an employee advocacy program

The key to maximizing the value of employee advocacy

The benefits of content marketing are immense. So much so, nearly every company now practices it in its many forms.

Why? Because all day, every day, people look for answers and solutions to solve the challenges they are facing. Thanks to the volume of information available online, people will be able to find those answers—and fast. So, the logical question that follows is:

Will the information come from you or your competitor?

Like nearly every form of marketing, the objective of content marketing is to increase website traffic, generate leads and create sales opportunities. Given the many benefits of content marketing, it's easy to make a robust list of reasons to start, maintain, and perpetually improve content marketing efforts:

1. Audience engagement

Content gives your customers more reasons to stick around, click around and get more involved in your brand community, which leads to higher conversion rates.

2. Brand reputation

Assuming your content is helpful, when people read, watch, view or listen to it, they'll be more drawn to your brand. Content marketing is key to building leadership in your industry and winning trust.

3. SEO

Every time you add a post or page to your website, you create a new resource to be indexed by the search engines and make your site more visible in Google search results.

Increase your marketing ROI with an employee advocacy program

4. Domain authority

The authority of your website—and ranking potential—expands as you publish a higher volume of useful content. When your content earns links from external sources, your website's domain authority increases.

5. Referral traffic

Contributing to external publications as a guest writer creates opportunities to expand your audience and earn valuable links to your site. An impressive post on a popular and authoritative site could generate thousands of new visitors.

6. Social media success

Promoting your content on social media platforms can boost its exposure in a great way. You'll earn more fans and followers, inspire social media shares, and drive traffic to your website.

7. Conversion

While first and foremost content marketing should deliver value to your audience, it also helps create demand. Your content should drive free trial signups, eBook downloads, contact requests, and of course, sales.

8. Sales acceleration

Content not only brings more leads to your site via inbound marketing channels, but also helps qualify prospects and capture leads for subsequent marketing automation tactics and/or one-to-one communications.

9. Customer loyalty

Delivering a steady stream of great and useful content helps you to build a bond with your customers (and employees, partners, industry pundits, etc.). Customers that rely on you as a primary source of information that helps them do their jobs better are bound to stick around and recommend your services to their peers.

10. Higher marketing ROI

Content marketing is more cost-effective than many traditional outbound marketing tactics. ROI compounds over time. While the magic isn't likely to be obvious in a few months, a sustained effort and continuous commitment will help slash your costs as the many benefits described above begin to snowball.

Increase your marketing ROI with an employee advocacy program

Content marketing and employee advocacy go hand in hand. They rely on each other to succeed.

However, marketers are facing challenges. Recent data from Buzzsumo found that ROI can be elusive:

- **Based on a sample of 100 million posts from 2017, average shares per post have dropped by 50% since 2015.**
- **90% of content earns less than 62 shares.**
- **Over 70% of all content published never links back to another domain.**

A **study of approximately 920 million web pages**, from Ahrefs, reveals that:

- **90.88% of pages get zero traffic from Google.**
- **55% of pages have zero backlink.**

Increase your marketing ROI with an employee advocacy program

“The economic value of simply publishing content is zero — unless it is seen and shared. When even the most successful content producers are seeing their posts, videos, and infographics stall against the wall of content shock, it is time for us all to recognize the battlefield before us.”

— Mark Schaefer (from Content Trends Report 2018, published by Buzzsumo)



Increase your marketing ROI with an employee advocacy program

Many brands have responded to these challenges by investing a larger percentage of their ad budget in social media advertising — and often — at higher costs.

Perhaps the best example of the rising costs of social media advertising comes directly from Facebook. [A quarterly report](#) from early 2018 from Facebook claimed that the average price per ad increased by 39% while the number of ad impressions served only increased by 8%.

Here's where it becomes easy to explain why your company should launch an employee advocacy program.

The good news is that your company already creates high-quality content. But content only works when it's coupled with an effective distribution strategy.

“The good news is that your company already creates quality content. But content only works when it's coupled with an effective distribution strategy.”

Increase your marketing ROI with an employee advocacy program

The reach multiplier

Employees have extensive social media networks. Thus, they have the potential to reach far more people than your brand can reach through corporate social media pages.

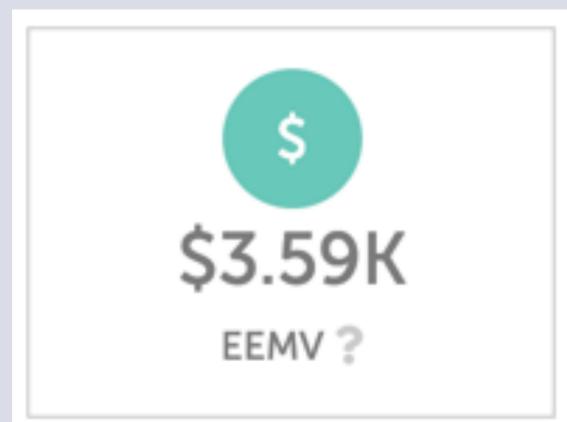
Smarp data reveals that employees have in average 420 friends on Facebook, 400 LinkedIn contacts, and 360 followers on Twitter. When you multiply numbers like these by the size of your workforce, you get the potential size of the audience your employees can reach — which may be enormous.



ROI alert

Earned media vs. paid media.

Earned media value is the monetary value your brand earns via third-party exposure. Smarp encourages you to regularly gauge your estimated earned media value (EEMV) and report it to the company's executives to deliver evidence of employee advocacy ROI.



Increase your marketing ROI with an employee advocacy program

The trust booster

Marketers, we have a trust problem.

The 2016 Edelman Trust Barometer tells us that 41% of consumers that trust a company will share positive opinions about it online. However, trust in brands and the traditional marketing tactics they use has dropped.

People are far more inclined to trust other people over brands. Again, this is where employee advocacy comes shining through. The voice of real people is heard — via social networks they've built trust equity in. In some cases, the channels may even extend beyond those used by your company's marketing department. Content shared by employees is perceived as more authentic and engaging than ads displayed by brands.

Increase your marketing ROI with an employee advocacy program

“For years, companies have done everything in their power to become more relatable to people, but they have missed the key component when it comes to becoming relatable with people. The most important component is having the people inside the company communicating with people outside the company.”

— Leonard Kim, Brand Strategist



Increase your marketing ROI with an employee advocacy program

How Smarp can support your content marketing strategy

Smarp shines in your content marketing strategy in a number of ways:



Your communication center

Smarp is an internal content hub which keeps employees engaged and informed through internal knowledge sharing. Your customizable hub is indexed according to topics, so employees can easily navigate between specific topics of interest and discuss posts via commenting threads.



Easy sharing

The intuitive platform functions as an external sharing platform to make it easy for employees to share content with their networks. After integrating all of their social profiles, users can schedule posts with just a few clicks, adding their own commentary to posts as they like.



Gamification

A built-in gamification feature makes content sharing fun and rewarding. Leaderboards show who has been the most active ambassadors recently, and a reward system empowers admins to incentivize activity.

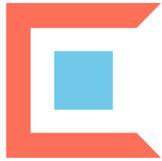


Idea sharing

Employees can propose content for others to share. Admins can designate certain team members as having the ability to instantly post freely, while sources like RSS and social accounts can be linked up for automated pushes to the hub.

Increase your marketing ROI with an employee advocacy program

How Smarp can support your content marketing strategy



Content creation

Employees have the opportunity to contribute to content development processes. Marketers can post queries for help, along with drafts in progress, and relevant topics experts can chime in.



Light on maintenance

There's no need to burden anyone with setup procedures. It's easy, much can be automated, and you'll have a dedicated customer success manager to assist you whenever needed.



Measurement

Smarp provides insights on the Estimated Earned Media Value and ROI. Extensive analytics make it easy to evaluate media engagement, referred traffic, and conversions referred by Smarp-originated social posts.

Boost your sales by empowering your employees on social media

Employee advocates shorten sales cycles

It's no secret to marketers and sales professionals that hard selling is, well, hard. It's less effective and rejected by buyers nearly universally. With soft selling tactics, sales representatives manage to build trust and drive engaging conversations with their leads.

The logic is simple: anyone, anywhere, at any time, can search for information online and will have no problems comparing products and solutions. When shopping, buyers value and trust informative content far more than pitches.

Your sales professionals must step up. They must be present, proactive, and most of all, helpful. Although buyers are well-informed, thanks to online media, they're still eager to find the information they need faster.

Providing relevant content is the best thing a sales representative can do when reaching out to a prospect. So, sales people need to take part in the conversation early, often and, of course, on social channels.

Social selling, as it's come to be called, should be the easiest aspect of employee advocacy to "sell" to executive-level decision makers. Data abounds regarding the impact social selling has on feeding the pipeline, accelerating sales cycles and increasing revenue.

Boost your sales by empowering your employees on social media

Let's review the benefits of social selling.

1. Visibility

Most buyers spend the majority of their time looking for online reviews and recommendations. They join online communities and ask questions from their peers before they start having conversations with sales representatives.

Social selling encourages your salespeople to listen to what's being said and respond helpfully. Sellers can use social media to relate to customers and identify opportunities for engagement at the right time. Continuous participation within relevant social groups allows salespeople to stay visible and valuable throughout their prospects' non-linear buying journeys.

2. Reputation management

Buyers not only research brands and products, they research salespeople. What will they find when they do? Everyone on your team, and not only your sales reps, can help cultivate brand trust by sharing well-curated third-party content that provides value to your target audience.

Plus, social networks help salespeople establish authenticity and credibility. Sellers create optimized, well-planned social profiles that helps the salesperson to build a trustworthy personal brand and a reputation for being an expert.

Boost your sales by empowering your employees on social media

Let's review the benefits of social selling.

3. Lead generation

The modern buyer has become a finicky, ad-filtering, easily put-off and impatient enigma to old-fashioned sellers. It's only getting harder to generate leads and revenue opportunities with traditional sales methods such as cold calling or marketing tactics such as banner advertising.

Social media is asynchronous and non-interruptive. Salespeople can gently — and more genuinely — enter into conversations around prospects' pain points and the merits of your company's products and services.

4. Customer retention

Growing a loyal customer base and increasing the customer's lifetime value is essential to the growth of modern brands. Social selling enables your salespeople to maintain contact with customers in a very non-invasive way. Sharing helpful content and answering questions inspires customer loyalty — and, of course, advocacy. Social selling culminates in referral business.

5. Increased productivity

Simply put, social sellers outperform their peers that stay away from social media. According to LinkedIn research, they create 45% more opportunities, are 51% more likely to achieve quotas, and outsell their non-social counterparts 78% of the time.

Boost your sales by empowering your employees on social media



ROI alert

Are you trying to obtain buy-in from the executives and sales managers at your company for social selling? Consider these stats:

- Sales representatives who use Social selling tactics realize 66% greater quota attainment than those using traditional prospecting techniques. (Source: [Social Selling 2017 Trends Report, Sales for Life](#))
- 90% of the top sales pros use social selling tools and consider social media integral to their sales strategy. (Source: [State of Sales in 2016, LinkedIn](#))
- 78% of salespersons active on social media outperform their peers (Source: [Forbes](#))
- Sales reps that utilize social selling activities are 79% more likely to hit their monthly goals. (Source: Aberdeen)
- 84% of C-suite executives and 70% of B2B decision makers rely on social media for purchase decisions (Source: [Social Buying Meets Social Selling, IDC](#))

Boost your sales by empowering your employees on social media

Making your case for social selling

If social selling has yet to be embraced by your company's executive leaders, the following tips should help you make a strong case for it.

Reiterate the needs

Executives should be reminded that:

- Sales prospects seek helpful experts on social media, both for content discovery and for one-on-one conversations.
- Sales prospects want to engage with people associated with visible, trusted brands.
- Every salesperson needs to be seen as authoritative, go-to person for useful content and advice.

Demonstrate that conversations are taking place

Research the conversations people are having about your company on social media and make sure that the boss understands how important it is for knowledgeable sales professionals to join those conversations (and how expensive it can be to ignore them).

Look at the competition

As part of the exercise above, you may discover competitors that are more responsive, informative and helpful to prospects. The boss needs to know about this.

Bring in early adapters

Find out if people within the company's sales force are using social media successfully and report on their results. Also, you might rally those who are willing to start and share their enthusiasm.

Deliver peace of mind

Concerns about how employees conduct themselves online often become a source of hesitation from the top. The executives should be assured that you'll be creating and enforcing social media guidelines in line with the company's best practices and governance rules. Make sure that the boss understands that you'll collaborate with legal, PR, HR, security and privacy teams to ensure all key stakeholders are all on the same page and support the program.

Boost your sales by empowering your employees on social media

Help employees to become thought leaders in the industry

It doesn't matter how many of your employees post content about your company on social media if they aren't positioned as thought leaders in your niche. The best way for people to accomplish this is to engage with influencers and peers, while consistently sharing content that provides value. By becoming trustworthy experts, your employees can attract an audience and nurture leads.

Share a smart launch plan

The executives and leaders across each key department should understand a regimented launch will be carefully planned and executed. To help ensure your success, Smarp will assist you with each critical step of your launch:

- Pre-launch communications
- Defining objectives and KPIs
- Finding and assigning program administrators
- Onboarding your initial advocacy team
- Timeline planning for program expansion
- Employee training
- All technical requirements

Why you should integrate Smarp into your social selling strategy

Why You Should Integrate Smarp into Your Social Selling Strategy

Smarp Is an Ideal Solution to Leverage Your Social Selling Efforts.

Your company's Smarp-powered content hub will help equip sales professionals with the resources they need to address the three phases of your buyer's journey:

• Awareness

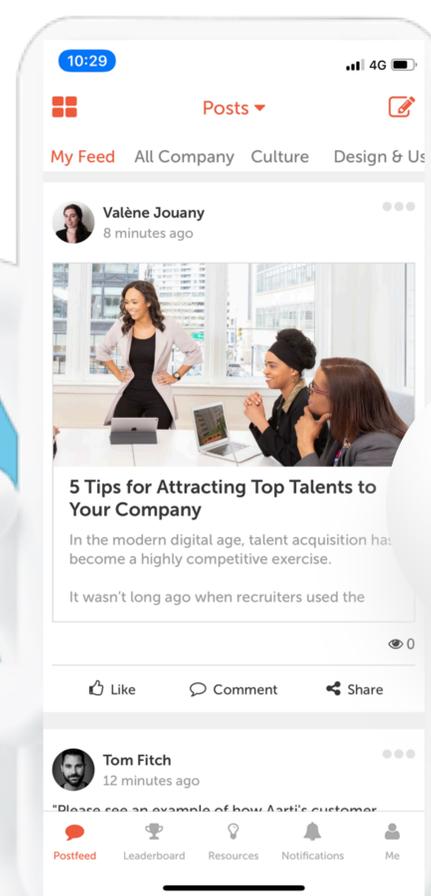
Prospects conduct research to identify solutions to address their challenges. Salespeople rely on Smarp to distribute content to heighten awareness and attract leads.

• Consideration

Prospects shortlist products, services and vendors. Salespeople use Smarp to share referrals, customer success stories, expert thoughts, and industry research to help get your company on the shortlist.

• Decision

Potential buyers seek answers to specific questions. Sales professionals can use social media, in addition to email, to deliver them.



Why you should integrate Smarp into your social selling strategy

Ease of use

Smarp functions as a topic-indexed discussion and content hub, making it easy to find and share up-to-date assets and resources. The intuitive and minimalist Nordic design makes the platform user-friendly, while mobile apps provide the convenience for employees to get caught up and schedule posts while they're on the go.

Flexibility

The enterprise edition is available as a branded web and/or mobile app. Easy scheduling of custom posts makes it simple for sales reps to develop their personal brands in batches, whenever the time is right.

Personalization

Employees choose the channels they want to subscribe to. The news feed provides everyone a personalized, filtered view. If someone's sales prospects care about specific product features, for example, then the rep can easily navigate straight to the dedicated topic tab.

Engagement

Smarp creates a gamified experience for sales professionals, making content sharing fun and rewarding. You can customize how your program scores activity and offer perks and rewards for various levels of engagement. Users who post the most, or drive the most traffic back to your site can receive gift certificates or can select charities to receive donations in their honor, for example.

Improve your social recruiting strategy to attract top talent to your company

Gaining an advantage for talent acquisition

Your company competes to find and hire the best talent but faces cold realities:

- **You don't always get to choose the best talent; you need them to choose you.**
- **Your best future employees may not be job hunting.**
- **Today's top talent chooses the companies they work for with great care, they want the company's values to be aligned with their personal values.**

Employee advocacy has the potential to make your HR team's job easier.

Empowering people across your organization to post to their own personal networks about what it's like to work at a company is an effective way to increase brand awareness and drive employee referrals.

Perhaps early in this discussion, we should examine some of the pitfalls of making hiring mistakes:

- **The average cost per hire is more than \$4,000, according to a recent estimate, and when you make a bad hire, you end up paying that at least twice (Source: Human Capital Benchmarking Report by SHRM).**
- **A bad hire could cost up to 30% of that individual's annual earnings. The overall costs of a bad hire depend on the size of your company, but for a small company, it can run up to \$11,000 (Source: Parker Lynch)**
- **Three-quarters of applicants say they consider an employer's brand image and 84% say that they would consider quitting their current job to move to a business with a positive company culture (Source: Smarp)**

Improve your social recruiting strategy to attract top talent to your company

The power of employer branding

You improve your employer brand when happy employees become the voices of your company.

Of course, social media plays an enormous role in branding your company, which can spark the interest of talented potential hires—including passive candidates. Consider your own employees' networks, and it's easy to understand that many great potential hires can be reached through them.

A great employer brand positions your organization as a company where top talents want to work. Benefits of having a positive employer brand include:

- **Improved recruiting**
- **Improved employee retention and engagement**
- **Higher revenue and lower costs**

The [**ERE Employer Branding Now survey**](#) found that 68% of the world's most attractive employers have proactive employer branding strategies in place.

There are many components to an effective employer branding strategy:

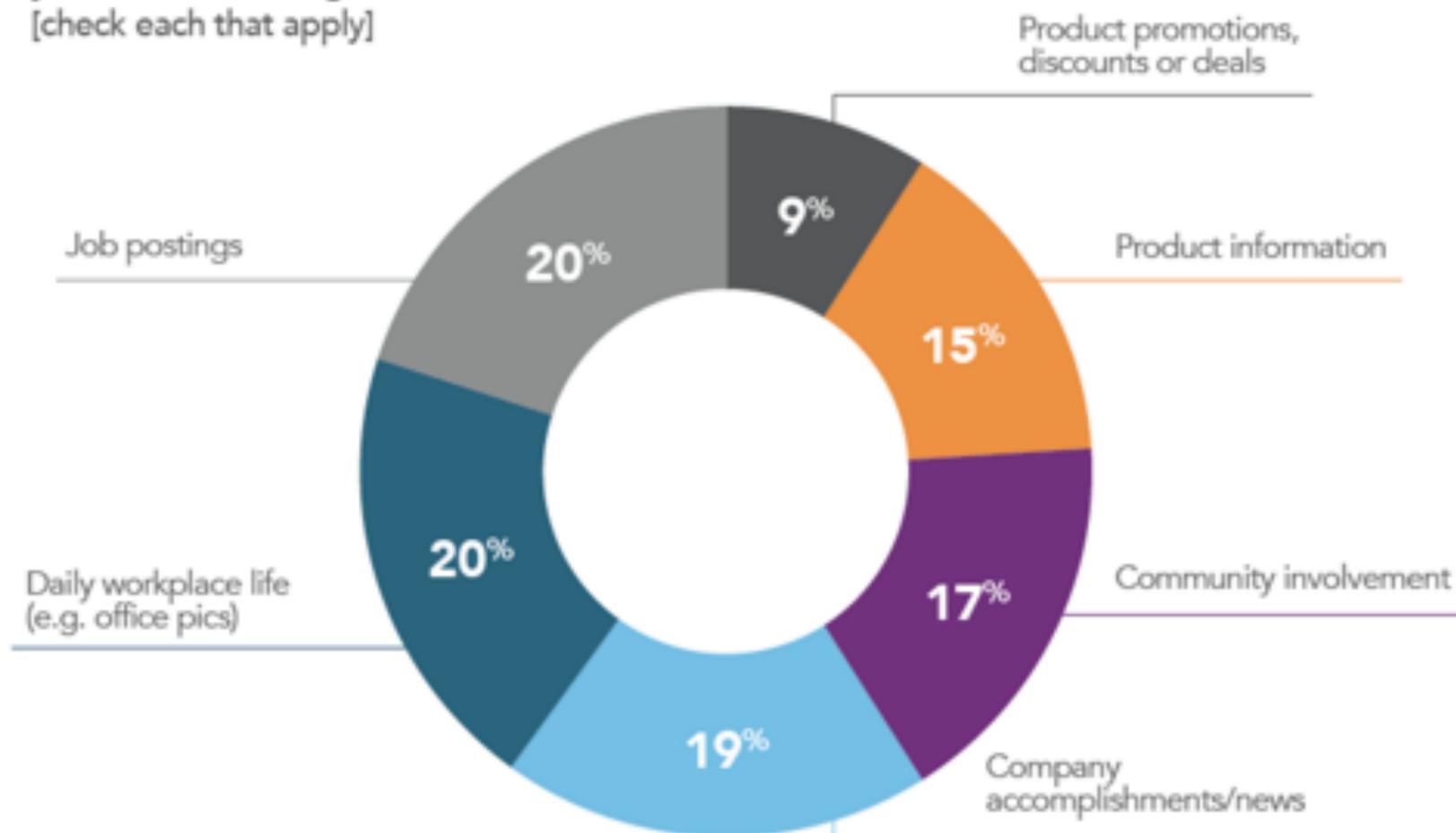
- **Creating a standout employer value proposition (EVP)**
- **Consistently applying the EVP to all talent sourcing activities and contact touchpoints**
- **Developing and distributing quality content that supports the EVP**

Key to all of this, of course, is building and sustaining an employee advocacy program, which is the most effective way to communicate and promote your employer brand.

Improve your social recruiting strategy to attract the right talent

Look at the types of content shared by employees, and it's easy to understand how employee advocacy can support your employer branding efforts:

"What kind of content have you shared about your work life through social channels?"
[check each that apply]



Source: Altimeter, Employee Survey, Global Average, Q1 2016, n=185

Improve your social recruiting strategy to attract the right talent

The power of social recruiting

Social recruiting is far from a novelty now. It's a critical part of a successful recruiting strategy. The recruiting benefits of employee advocacy programs are many and should be presented clearly to your company's executives:

1. A bigger applicant pool

We did the math earlier: employees have in average close to 1,200 followers across the social media channels they use. Multiply that by the number of employees you have, and it becomes clear that social media is an avenue that massively expands the size of the audience you can reach.

2. A more trusted source of information

As you already know, your employees have a more trustworthy voice than your corporate brand. When prospective candidates hear about job opportunities from them, the job appears more desirable. Prospective candidates will often interact with employees directly to ask questions about the position and your company.

3. An engaging approach

Empowering employees to participate in social recruiting is an act of trust that sparks higher employee engagement and increases the value of the brand.

Improve your social recruiting strategy to attract the right talent



ROI alert

Your company's HR director already knows how powerful social media and employee advocacy are for recruiting. If the CEO doesn't, you may want to share some of the following statistics:

- Job seekers rank current employees as the most trusted source for information about a company (Source: [The Future of Recruiting, CareerArc](#))
- Job seekers rank social media and professional networks as the most useful job search resource compared to job boards, job ads, recruiting agencies, and recruiting events (Source: [The Future of Recruiting, CareerArc](#))
- 65% of respondents would consider an opportunity for a new job if they learned about it from a personal connection. ([Monster](#))
- 84% of companies were recruiting via social media in 2016 (Source: [Society for Human Resource Management](#))
- 71% said social media recruiting was effective to decrease time to fill non-management positions and 67% reported the same for management positions (Source: [Society for Human Resource Management](#))

Improve your social recruiting strategy to attract the right talent

How Smarp Can Help You Attract the Right Talent

Awareness

When your team members share content about your company's various projects and accomplishments—which they can easily find on your Smarp content hub—their peers are more likely to see the idea of working for you in a positive light. Moreover, sharing job openings ensures your people know about new opportunities in your organization. This is especially powerful when you consider that your most engaged employees are the people whose followings are most likely to become your next top performers.

Distribution

Smarp makes it easy for employees to share the company's job openings to their networks. Just like any other type of content sharing effort, it's important to ensure that your job openings will be seen by a large audience of relevant applicants, which is why peer-to-peer sharing is critical.

Engagement

Smarp topic feeds inspire increased engagement and discussions amongst employees, increasing the likelihood of having employees sharing positive social posts about working for your company. When people give each other virtual high fives as a consistent habit, positive sentiment about the employee experience at your company becomes contagious and self-reinforced.

Alignment

Across the organization, in departments including marketing, sales, and HR, existing employees align around the company's employee value proposition and are better informed when communicating about the company. When everyone is in the loop regarding the latest company news and projects, keeping the online conversation "on message" becomes second nature.

Measure your employee advocacy success

Make your metrics matter

People that you may need to convince about the merits of employee advocacy are probably going to ask questions such as:

- **Is employee advocacy quantifiable?**
- **What does a successful employee advocacy program look like?**
- **How do we gauge our progress?**

You need to be prepared to answer these questions, and you can do so with analytics. Employee advocacy works in line with other marketing strategies and should be measured much like the other programs you invest time and money in.

Smarp makes measuring your employee advocacy ROI easy. Built-in analytics features enable you to measure and report on:

- **Brand reach**
- **The estimated earned media value (EEMV) of clicks**
- **The volume of social posting activity**
- **The performance of various content types**
- **The performance of social messages**
- **Talent acquisition as a goal conversion**
- **Conversions per social selling campaign**
- **Individual successes**

You can also measure the quality of traffic coming in through your employee advocacy campaigns in Google Analytics, by examining metrics to answer questions such as:

- **Do visitors referred by your advocacy posts spend more time on your website?**
- **How many pages do they visit?**
- **Is the bounce rate lower or higher?**
- **What is your most popular content?**
- **What actions does it lead to?**

Measuring the success of your employee advocacy program also enables you to determine which type of content interests your own employees and what they will share.

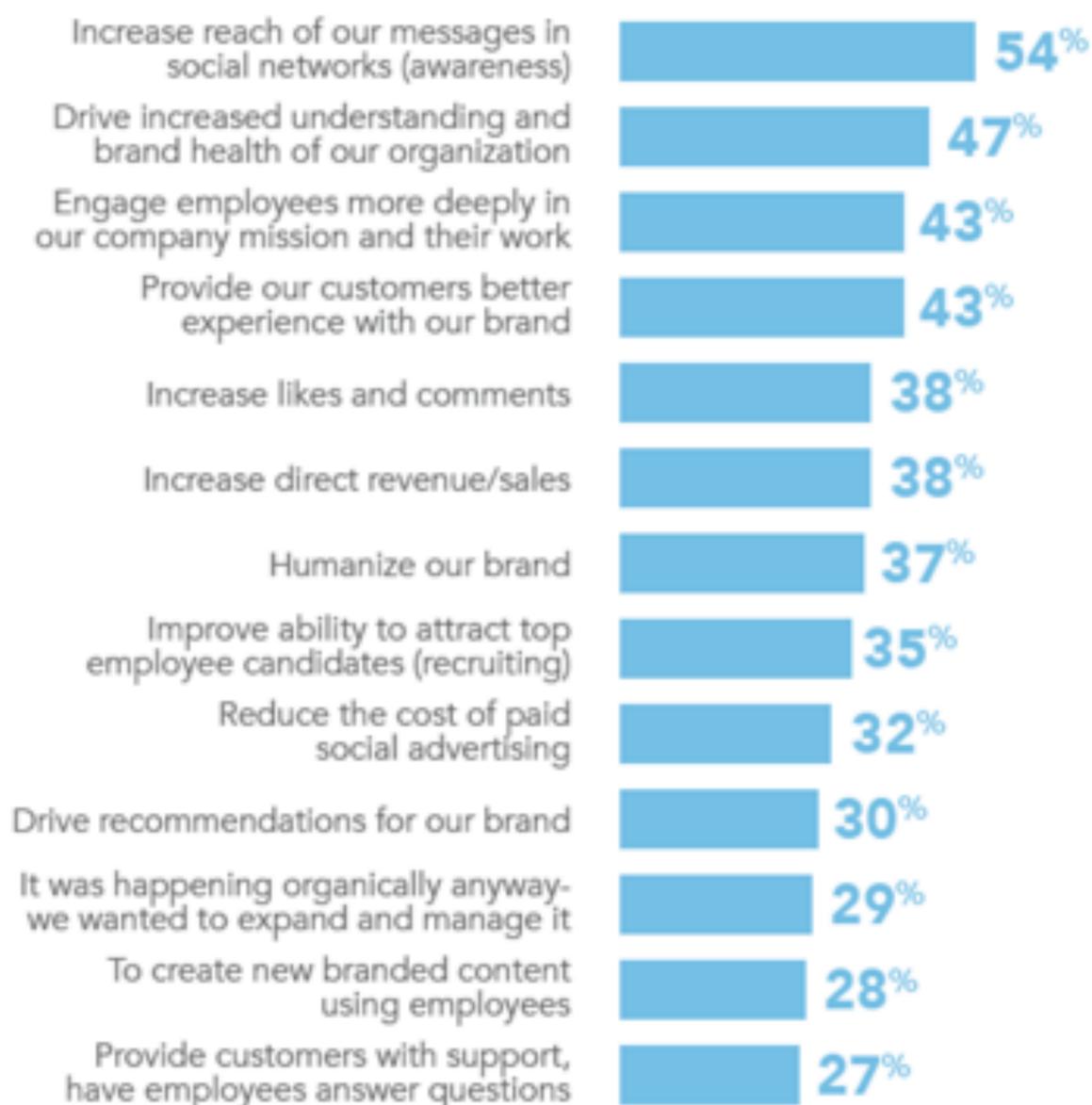
Conclusion

Grow your business with employee advocacy

In its Social Media: Employee Advocacy study from 2016, Altimeter reported that 90% of brands are pursuing or have plans to pursue some form of employee advocacy.

They also present the following:

Top Business Drivers for Employee Advocacy Programs



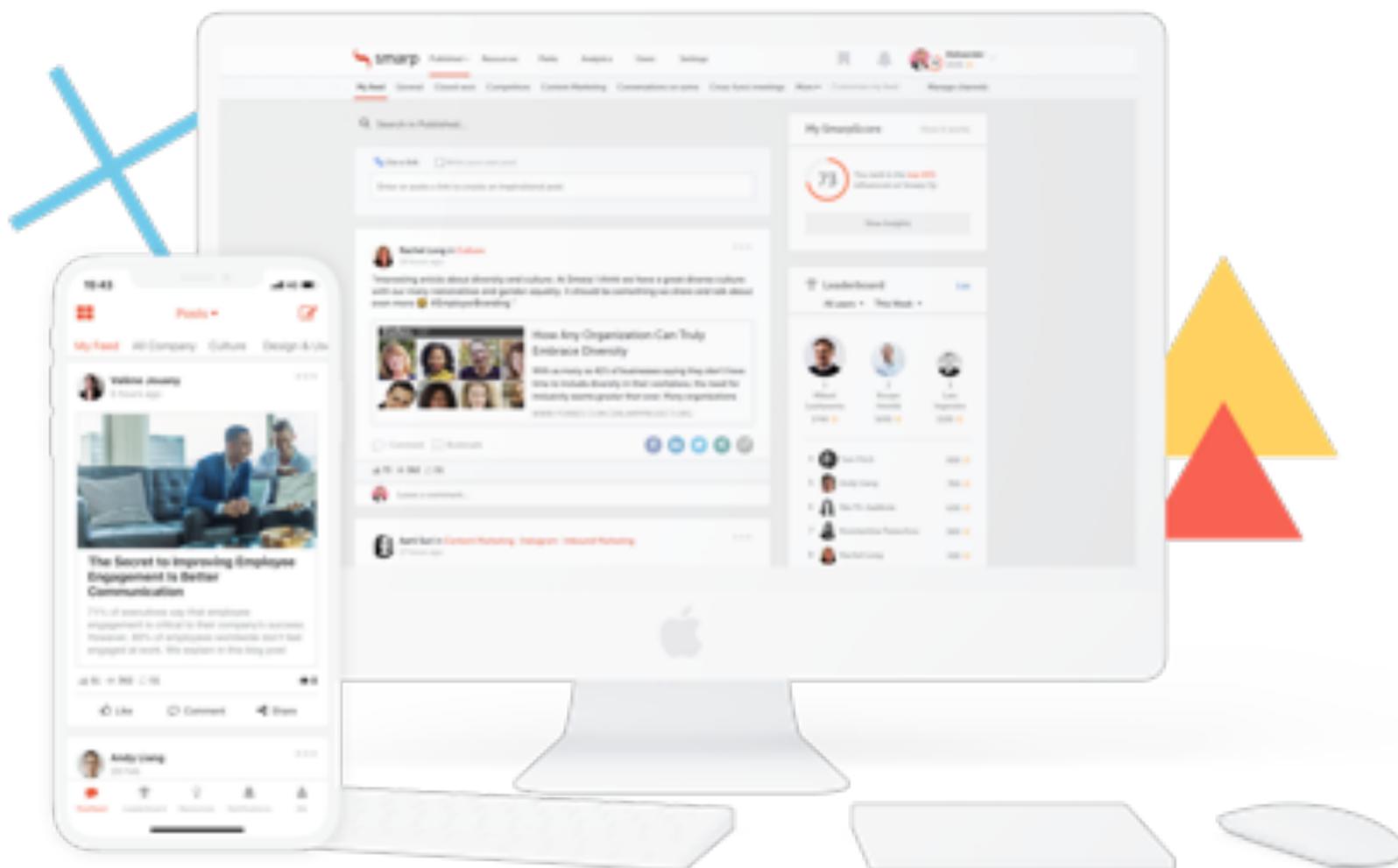
Source: Altimeter, Brand Survey, Q1 2016, n=164 for companies with > 250 employees

ALTIMETER
@Prophet

Conclusion

Smarp is the solution that makes it easy, engaging and secure (it's ISO 27001 certified and GDPR-compliant) to drive advocacy through information sharing. Currently, more than 4 million employees depend on Smarp for content discovery and distribution.

However, you'll do best if you approach Smarp as more than just a tool. The Smarp solution should be an integral part of your long-term company communication strategy to build a social culture of sharing and collaboration.





Ready to get started with Smarp?

[BOOK A DEMO](#)