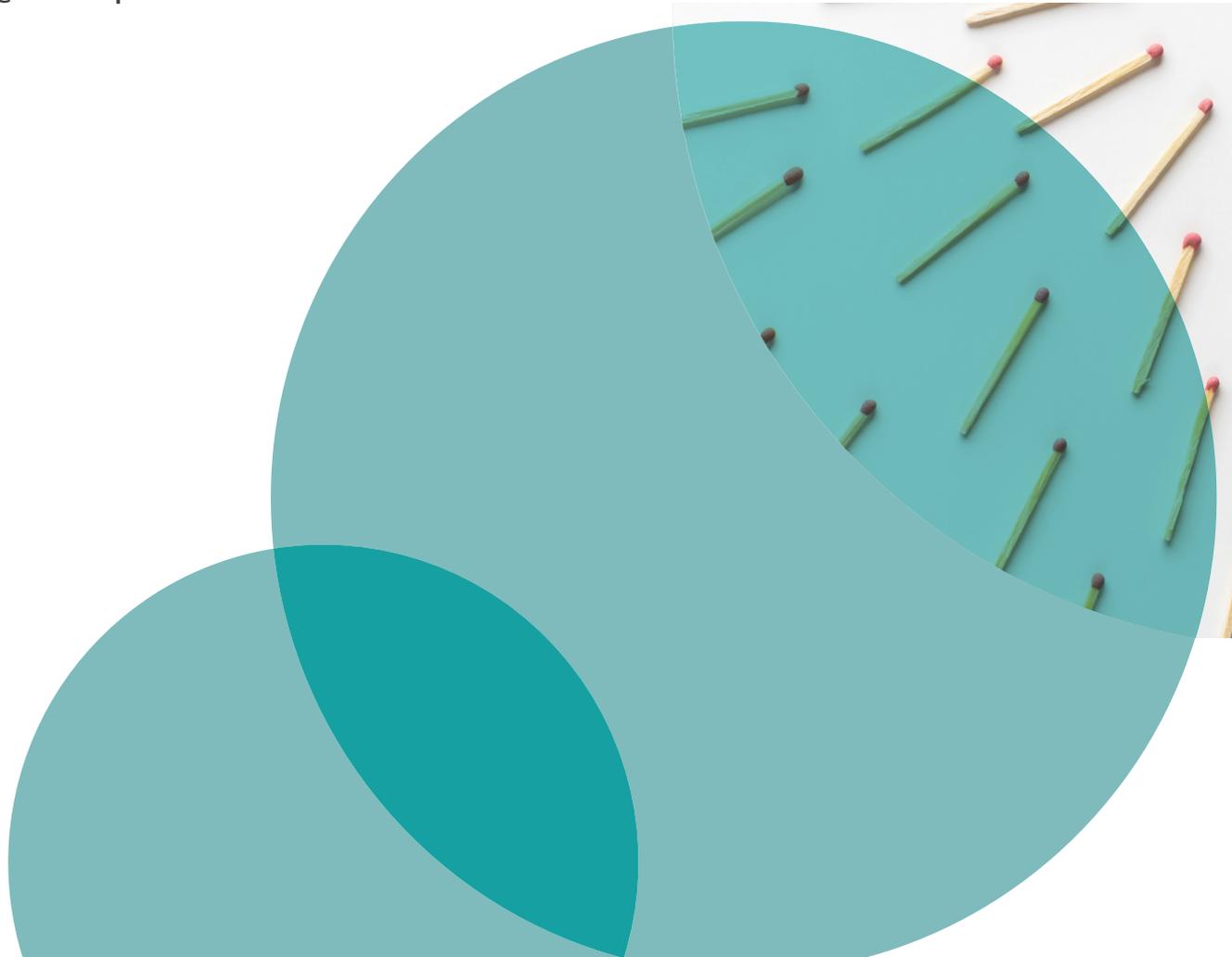


## Social C-Suite:

# How to Activate Your Leadership Team on Social Media

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@tribalimpact



## Why the C-suite needs to take social media seriously

### THE SOCIAL AGE

Our digital era is in full flow and everything from socialising to selling and building relationships is done from screen to screen. No surprise, then, that there are trust issues when it comes to the corporate world. A lack of true human interaction is perhaps what drives consumers to feel the need for authenticity when they are considering buying a product or service.

It is for this reason that corporations need to get social. We're not just talking social media advertising or having a profile on LinkedIn. For



a company to truly be social, there needs to be a culture shift from top to bottom in terms of strategising, marketing, delivering and hiring.

### SOCIAL BUSINESSES AND CREDIBILITY

We know that the buyer journey has changed. Just as global public trust in top executives is at an all-time low of 37%, content shared online by employees leads to eight times higher engagement and 25 times more re-shares.

According to Forbes, after watching a video on social media, an impressive 64% of users are more likely to buy a product online.



It's clear, therefore, that there's a need for increased buy-in of social business at C-Suite level.

Currently less than 10% of executive leaders in Asia Pacific are active on social media, despite the fact that companies with active leaders are perceived 23% more positively than those with inactive leaders.

In fact, a social C-Suite seems to be the solution to several business woes, because executive social media engagement results in higher brand recognition, higher levels of employee engagement and performance and, perhaps most importantly, an increase in public trust.

## SO, WHAT DOES BECOMING A SOCIAL LEADER ENTAIL?

Firstly, it means accepting the disruption and discomfort of our social age. The shifts in technology and methods of communication have dramatically altered the expectations held of business leaders. Here are the fundamental changes that have led to these new expectations:

- **From IT as a department to a fundamental foundation:** Changing technology is changing business rules of operation. Business Communications are no longer time-bound; working communities are no longer geography-bound. Perhaps the biggest issue for organisations is that they

are no longer in control of the “network” they operate through. Social media removes the safety net of controlling the brand news.

- **From formal frameworks to collective communities:**

The hierarchical cascade of information within an organisation is now consigned to history. Modern leaders are equipped to send whatever message they want, when they want, to whomever they want. Feedback is also forthcoming, in its rawest format. Perhaps this presents a scary scenario to some. But it also opens the door for leaders to act with transparency and authenticity. Digital leaders can become influential both inside and outside of their organisation. In fact, some 73% of employees search to see what their CEOs are saying on social media.

- **From ‘knowledge is power’ to lifelong learning:**

The social age has changed our relationship with learning. Technology makes accessing information and communicating with other remote communities easy. It’s the responsibility of the social CEO to build high-performing teams and unlock digital potential within their organisation.

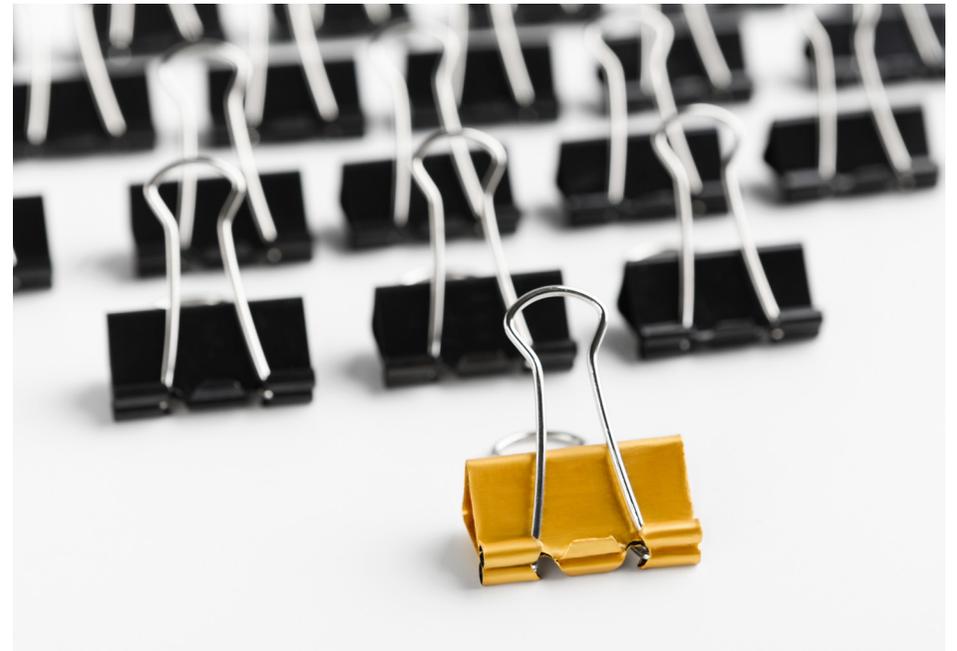
- **From listening to living brand values:**

Never has there been such a spotlight on walking the talk. Anything other than ethically sound and moral cultures are likely to be exposed through the raw and unfiltered channel of social media. Employees look to leadership as an example of what is achievable and expected.

- **From command and control to trusted authenticity:**

Trusted authenticity is critical to social leadership. Fake news has taught us to question authority and so we consult our own trusted networks when we need to make decisions. For trusted

authenticity to truly work, the social leader needs to empower their internal community to advocate on behalf of the brand. Understanding individual purpose, telling stories and listening to others will differentiate the social CEO.





## Why it's time to get your C-suite active on social media:

Recent findings suggest a social C-suite is an asset. We know that we are working within a trust economy where leadership is no longer synonymous with authenticity. People don't believe logos. They want a human-led approach.

When it comes to the social executive, the Global Social CEO Survey, from Brandfog, reported that 75% of respondents consider social CEOs to be better leaders.

In fact, the entire C-suite will improve their public perception by being active on social media.

And that's because social businesses are proven to achieve better results in terms of sales, more quickly than those who rely on more traditional methods of customer engagement. In fact, the same report showed that 55% of respondents believe that social CEOs positively influence purchase intent. This thought leadership and influencer status is where your leadership team should be aiming.

To back this up, Brandfog's statistics show that 70% of respondents say executive engagement on social media leads to brand trust.

- **They can drive innovation by listening to what people are asking for, are needing, or what annoys them.**

They can gather information about what needs fixing. All these activities will remove friction from the business and show the leadership as being aligned with the corporate values, truly putting the customer first.

- **They can use the social platforms to build employee engagement, too.**

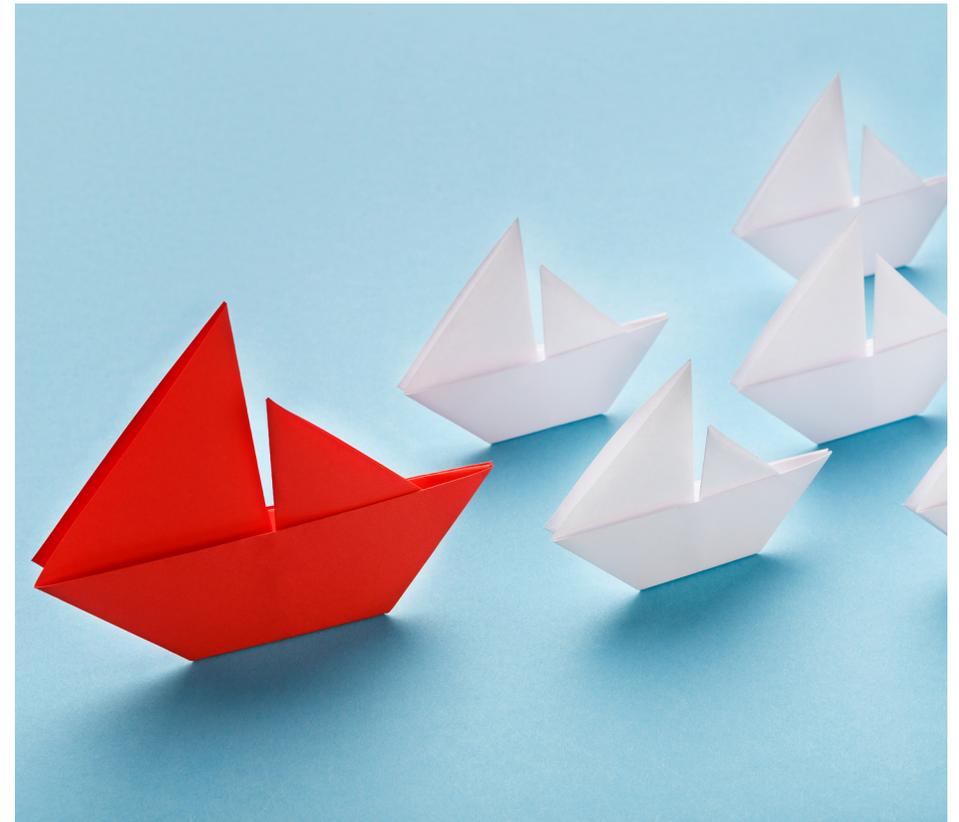
By sharing stories and showing their human side, they can engage existing employees as well as showcasing the business' culture for potential future hires. Transparency such as this will inspire the rest of the organisation.

- **They can show they are living the brand values.**

A poster proclaiming you are trustworthy, transparent and team-oriented no longer cuts it. Proof is needed and what better way than to show examples of how the values are alive and thriving throughout the organisation on your real-time social media feed.

- **They can drive true competitive differentiation.**

To become an authentic social leader is not a quick or easy feat. Many leaders will not adapt their style. But every leader that does will champion connectivity within and outside of their organisation. It's not a nice to have. A social C-suite is now essential for business growth.



## WHAT STOPS LEADERS FROM BEING SOCIAL AND HOW TO COUNTER THESE OBJECTIONS.

According to Hootsuite research (2017) - Nearly 70% of executives still believe it's risky to participate on social media.

Perceived risks centre around compliance, confidentiality and the close inspection of working practices that comes from raising the brand profile.

Fears often grow out of a lack of knowledge so it's critical to give your C-suite time to get to grips with what a social culture looks like and can achieve. Here are Tribal Impact's five top tips for getting your C-Suite settled with social:



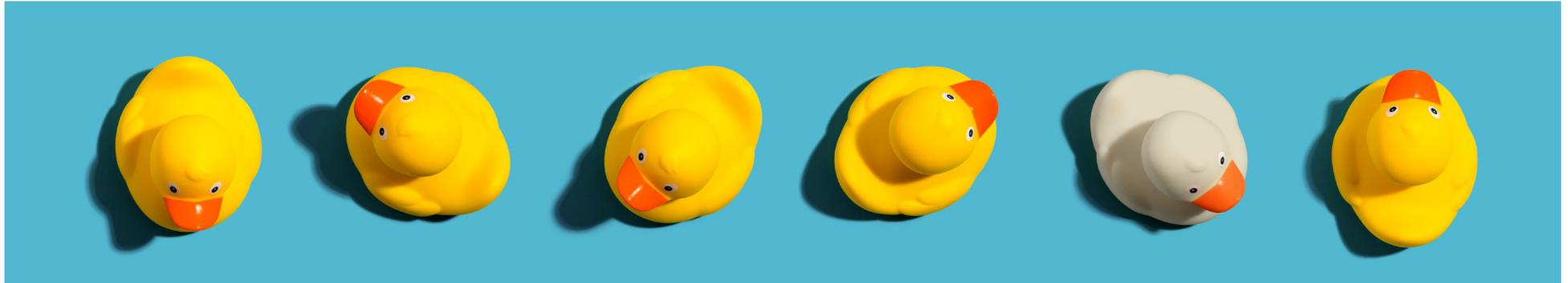
**1.** Support them with content and start small: Tribal Impact's Coffee Cup Routine is a great habit-forming ritual, which makes social activity feel a natural part of the working day.

**2.** If they quite simply don't know how to use social media, something that's very normal at C-suite level, give them the chance to take in just the bits they need to know. They only need to focus on the elements their role needs. Again, providing a range of appropriate content can get them over the first hurdle of a lack of inspiration.

**3.** If they are traumatised by transparency, reassure them with a clear set of guidelines. A business should never be social without a policy which sets out boundaries and helps people to make the right decisions when sharing content. Clear guidelines on when to engage and when to ignore are also important at executive level, as they may be asked to comment on a wider issue, which may not benefit the brand. If you operate within a closely governed industry, such as the financial industry, make sure the relevant additional red tape is covered in your policy e.g. financial promotions

**4.** Reassure them that this isn't meant to be a quick win. Becoming a social business is a huge cultural shift and it needs to happen gradually. As they take small steps towards advocacy and thought leadership, the results will speak for themselves. Make sure relevant performance metrics are captured and presented back regularly.

**5.** A lack of direction in terms of content can be a massive stumbling block. Without a clear social strategy, you might not see such clarity of results. Understanding your executive's angle and purpose online is key and your leadership team might need some third-party guidance here.



## WHAT IS A SOCIAL EXECUTIVE? SOMEONE WHO IS...

- Actively participating on social media. Regularly visible; using different types of content and contributing to conversations
- Sharing content that inspires them. Their feed needs to show their own personality and involvement. Otherwise it will quickly be perceived as an automated mouthpiece for the

brand and be subject to the trust issues that come with that perception

- Writing content that speaks to their values and passions. This comes down to building an authentic and human profile, but it also means their posts don't always have to be work related. Some lifestyle, family or general opinion pieces will go a long way to creating an engaging social leader (but don't forget to steer clear of the usual hot spots like politics and religion)

- Engaging with others. Social media channels are two-way and it's important to influence the debate, as well as starting it off. To be considered an expert in their field, the social C-suite needs to be present when it matters. They should be championing their opinions, using their experience to lead and influence opinion and doing so as often as possible
- Networking. No longer just a face-to-face activity, building and nurturing digital relationships is just as

important as the physical act of networking. This type of social media presence provides an insight into the human behind the executive and almost always evolves into a lasting business relationship

- Listening. Social selling is often in the spotlight, but social listening is equally, if not more, important. Your social CEO cannot become an influencer if they aren't aware of the issues which are relevant to their own organisation or trending more widely



## BENEFITS OF SOCIAL LEADERSHIP

Research shows that, in 2016, only 40% of Fortune 500 CEOs were active on at least one of six major social networks. This report by CEO.com goes on to say that of the Fortune 500 CEOs that were included in the research, 69 were active on more than one channel and just 15 were active on more than two.

It's clear, then, this is far from a crowded space. Any benefits of social leadership are there for the taking. Emerging social C-suites are pioneers, not followers.

We've already discussed the benefits in terms of perception, trust and authenticity and their importance in today's business world. But there are a host of related benefits too, including:

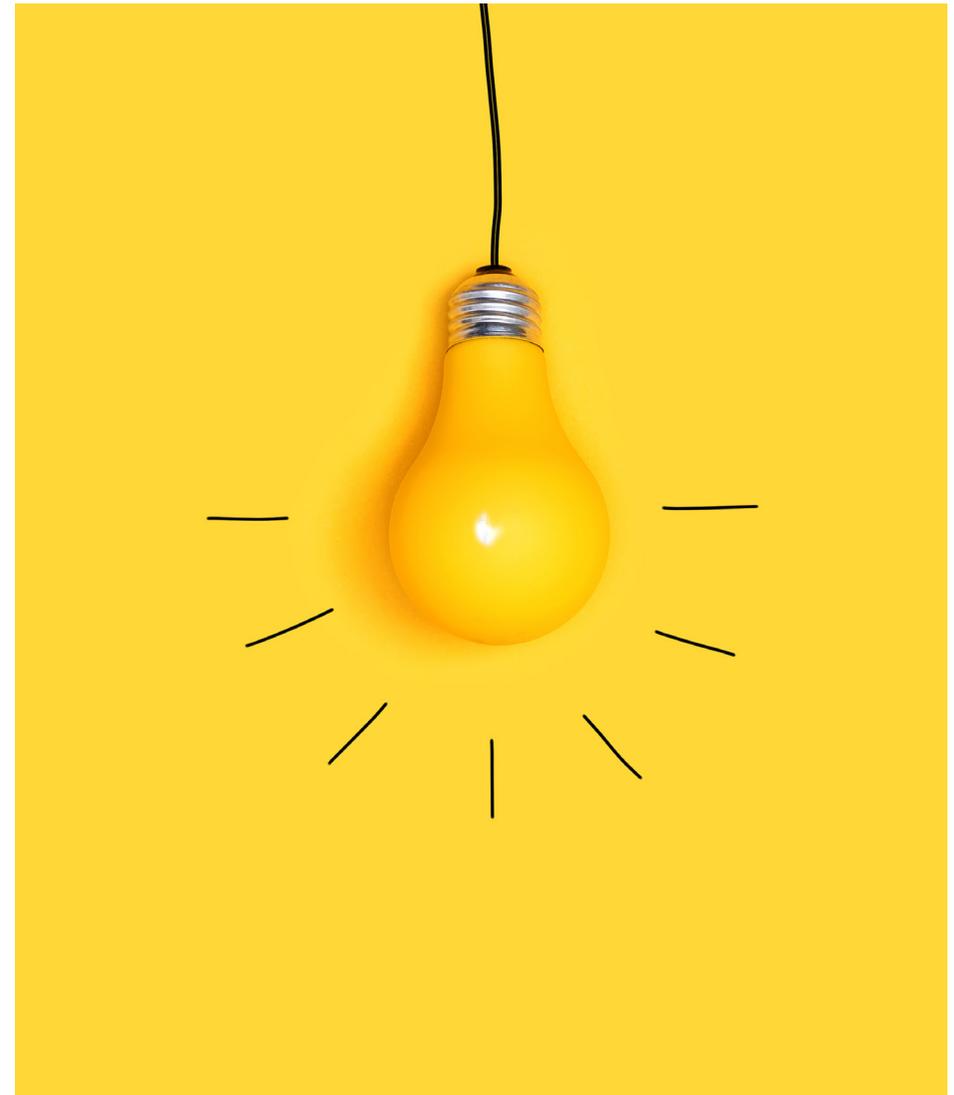
- Being able to attract and retain top talent
- Encouraging social communication within the company, which leads to productivity boosts
- Listening to the customer and employee communities and therefore understanding what's driving the conversation (which, in turn, gives rise to future business growth opportunities for innovation)
- Leading by example, and inspiring others to follow
- Becoming a thought leader and influencer
- Connecting with customers, partners and prospects
- Strengthening the brand reputation
- Humanising the brand (and showing that it is more than a logo)
- Growing relationships with external influencers
- Being better able to confront crisis management (socially active executives will be better able to mitigate a crisis or dampen one quickly)
- Showing innovation compared to competition
- Being transparent about values (social media activity highlights how the values are being lived, not just what they are)
- Enhancing media relationships
- Providing an authentic, filter-free insight into your world

## CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL EXECUTIVES

So, what makes a social executive? Is there a personality type that works more effectively on social media?

Of course, it's important for leaders to remain true to themselves when posting content, but here are some of the likely characteristics that natural digital executives might display:

- Approachable
- Active
- Humble
- Passionate
- Consistent
- Authentic
- Inspiring
- Transparent
- Human
- Willing to listen
- Comfortable in engaging with employees
- Happy to engage with customers
- Keen to share useful information
- Live the brand voice





## WHAT IS A SOCIAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM?

A social leadership program is a structured set of activities to identify, introduce, onboard and support leaders with social transformation. In order to successfully transition your executives to become a social C-suite, you need to keep them comfortable with the concept of sharing more widely. They need to know the risks of a public profile are understood and have been mitigated. They need to understand that getting this right; becoming a social leader and influencer; needs to be done properly. It needs authenticity. In other words, this isn't a 'done for you' service, the content needs to come from the horse's mouth, so to speak.

Your program will be focused around connecting leaders to employees, customers and communities, both regionally and globally. And that's not just for their content to be shared. A social leadership program will integrate social listening, publishing and other tools, which can help them to stay on top of their public profile.

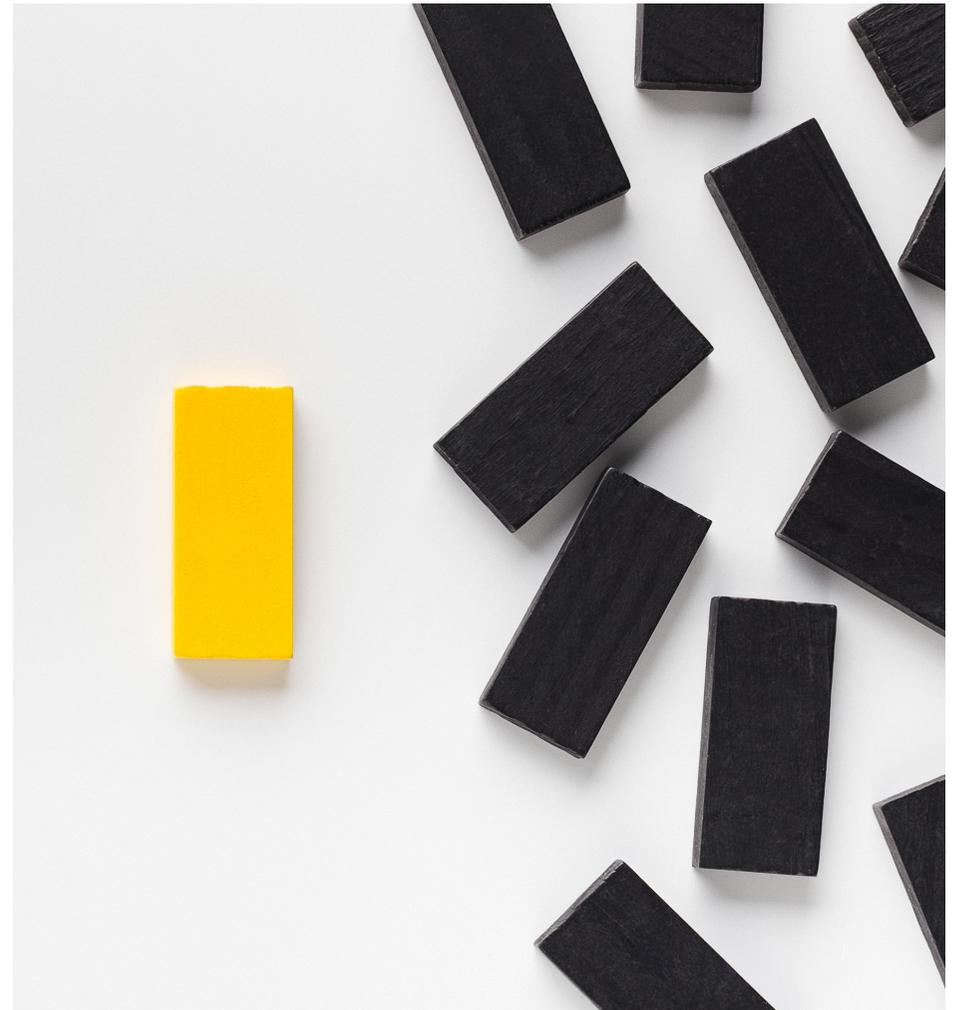
Of course, your social leadership program also needs to be measured. You should use holistic measurement criteria across the whole program, regardless of level or location.

And finally, your social leadership program should share best practice for content and governance.

## WHY BUILD A SOCIAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM?

Once their social profile is up and running, these executives are going to have to find their own way with networking and relationship building. However, they are a time-poor bunch, so there's nothing wrong in giving them a head-start by creating and launching a social leadership program. It's far more convincing to show people something that exists and which they can get on board with immediately, than trying to sell them a concept. In a nutshell, here are Tribal Impact's reasons to put together a social leadership program:

- They need clear and concise guidance (even if they have an appetite for social, they might not know where or how to start)
- It can provide tools, guidance and reverse mentoring
- It can help them to maximise benefit from the time they spend on social, as well as keeping them focused on the right activities
- It provides support when they are creating a professional first impression on their digital channels
- It can help them learn when (and when not to be) social



## HOW TO BUILD AN OPTIMISED LINKEDIN PROFILE

**Banner** – Your background photo appears behind your profile photo. Upload an image that represents you, your role or industry.

**Profile photo** – Add a professional photo of your face. Fill 60% of the frame with your face and avoid edited photos, busy backgrounds and unrecognisable images.

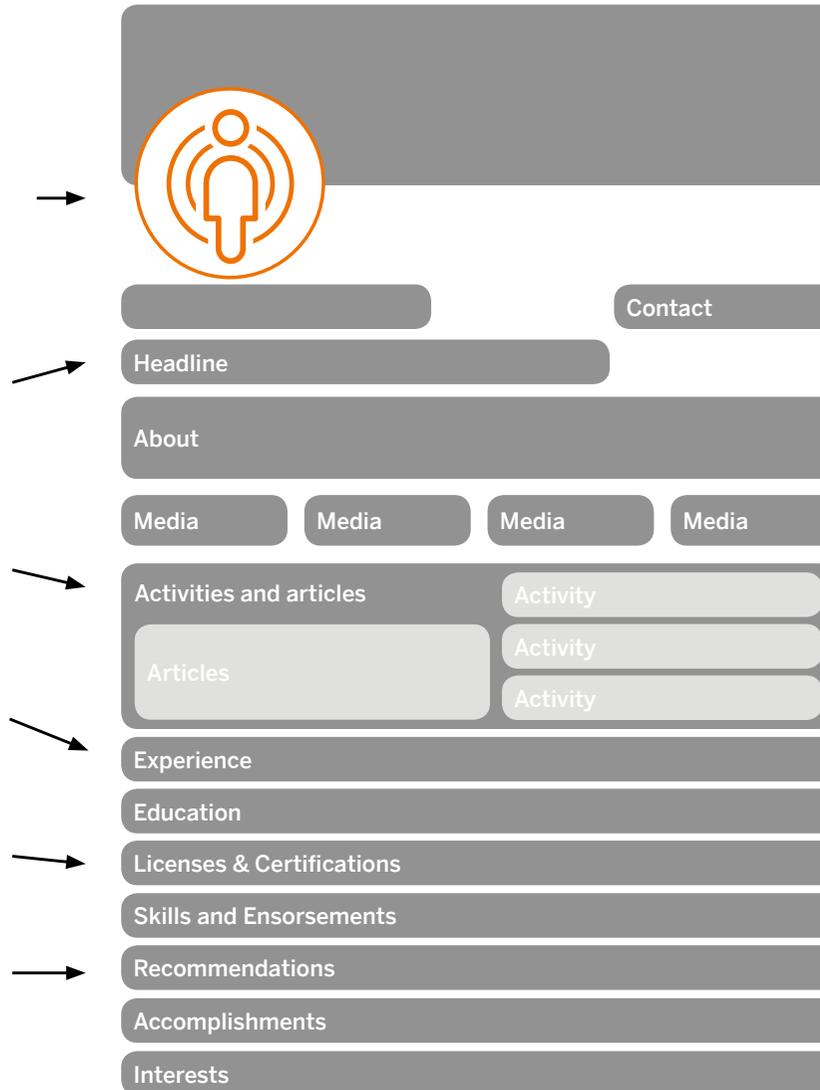
**Headline** – Replace your job title with a keyword optimised statement that summarizes what you do, who you help and how you do it.

**Activities & Articles** – If you share, engage and/or write content on LinkedIn you will see this box appear.

**Experience** – Expand your headline. Write in the first person and communicate your passion.

**Licenses & Certifications** – Certifications are a great way to showcase your knowledge and professional achievements. Add them here.

**Recommendations** – Add at least 2 from past or current connections to add credibility.



**Contact** – Update your email to a professional one. Customise your public profile URL to remove the random numbers at the end. If on Twitter, secure a similar URL to your Twitter handle.

**About** – Expand on your headline. Write in the first person and communicate your passion for the work you do. Humanise the story of you. Use keywords throughout so you are searchable.

**Media** – Adding media can embellish your profile and direct your readers to learn more. Include case studies, videos, interviews, articles you've been featured in, public presentations you've delivered.

**Education** – Expand on your education. Write about projects you've done and remember to include keywords.

**Skills & Endorsements** – Review your skills – remove the ones you don't want and add the ones you do want. Ask your colleagues to boost your endorsements.

**Accomplishments** – Detail out your awards, languages, professional bodies and publications here.

In summary, becoming a socially engaged business is no longer a 'nice to have', it's a 'must do'. Our digital era is progressing at a rapid rate. This presents huge opportunity for business, but it also opens the door to a much busier playing field.



According to Daniel Priestley in his book, *Entrepreneur Revolution*, “today’s teenager can sit in their bedroom and have access to more tools for building a global enterprise than Coca-Cola did when they grew internationally.”

This means that even the top businesses need to watch and learn from the changes being made by online collaboration.

According to LinkedIn, 75% of B2B buyers use social media to support their purchase decisions

According to Citrix, 50% of today’s workforce consider themselves to be digital natives and that figure is expected to rise to 75% by 2025. As arbiters of social engagement, these digital natives have expectations in terms of the companies in which they work and the world in which they live. Any company without a social footprint will risk dropping out of the competitive market. Corporate culture has always been a differentiator for those who work within it. Now, the way you run your company could affect everyone from employees to customers and prospects too.

## 5 EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL LEADERS

A great way of honing your social skills is to find examples of those doing it already.



**CTO of HubSpot**  
[Dharmesh Shah](#)

Tech geek; experienced blogger; admits his lack of social skills; made the transition because he values feedback for development purposes and connection with customers.

Most active on Twitter; posts a real mix of fun and serious; personal and business content.



**CEO of SAP**  
[Bill McDermott](#)

Company leader – inspiring story – passionate about technology and the team around him. Truly puts employees in front of logo.

Regularly posts motivational thoughts; walks the talk by showcasing his leadership style and strength on social media.



**CEO of Southwest Airlines**  
[Gary Kelly](#)

Hugely successful Chairman and CEO, credited with guiding Southwest Airlines to become the largest civilian carrier.

Uses Twitter to focus on his employees (nearly every post mentions them along with his bio); authenticity, values and personality comes through strongly in his feed.



**CEO of American Family Mutual**  
[Jack Salzwedel](#)

Chairman and CEO of American Family Mutual following a career spent entirely in the insurance industry; has presided over much growth, both financially and from a community perspective.

Regularly posts on LinkedIn and Twitter; mix of brand promo and his own passions, sport and good causes; proves that even leaders in heavily regulated industries can be social.



**CEO of Teenage Cancer Trust**  
[Kate Collins](#)

With a history of fundraising roles in the cancer charity space, Kate has worked her way up to CEO from grass roots levels at Teenage Cancer Trust.

Promotes and amplifies the work of her charity. Charities can use social to raise awareness of the causes they represent; highlighting stories that matter most to them and differentiate themselves from other charities.



Tribal Impact specialises in social media advocacy. We work with B2B organisations that are frustrated, because they can no longer cut through the digital noise to reach their audience. We do this by helping them join the dots between Social Selling, Social Media Marketing and Employee Advocacy.

Learn more at [www.tribalimpact.com](http://www.tribalimpact.com)



### Creating impact with...

