eBook

Seven Steps To Reinvigorate Your Employee Advocacy Program

If you've downloaded this ebook, the chances are you've experienced a reduction in quality engagement in your employee advocacy program once you've passed the initial honeymoon period. You may have lots of members in your program but are they active and engaged?

It's common for employee advocacy programs to experience a drop off in engagement after an initially successful and buoyant 6-9 months. After this point, things can tail off and you'll need some further process and incentivisation to keep people motivated.

So, to assist with reinvigorating your program, this ebook will cover:

- What to do if your program is faltering and engagement from your people is dwindling
- How to plan and run a successful relaunch vwhich injects energy and enthusiasm into the program
- How to set, track and measure goals which drive the program forward
- What activities combine to make a successful and sustainable employee advocacy program

Like any major change, an Employee Advocacy Program is something that needs more than simply implementing. It needs continually nurturing, reviewing and refining in order to maximise adoption and become part of the business culture.

Perhaps because ownership of such a scheme isn't always obvious, or perhaps because implementation teams think the training of the users is only a part of the initial phase, employee advocacy programs often experience problems with long-term adoption.

At Tribal, we get many enquiries from organisations who have a fantastic tool, have led a successful launch campaign but aren't really seeing the success they anticipated. If that sounds familiar, then this ebook is for you. Here are our seven steps to long-term success with employee advocacy.

1

Establish A Brand

One way of increasing adoption rates is to raise the profile of the program within the organisation. Often, businesses will give their program an identity and personality. You can take this as far as you like – from simply a name, to a logo, and many programs have a hashtag which is used so that the program leaders can track the impact of advocacy-driven content on the wider social media conversation. Doing this helps people to see the program as real and makes it far easier to communicate.

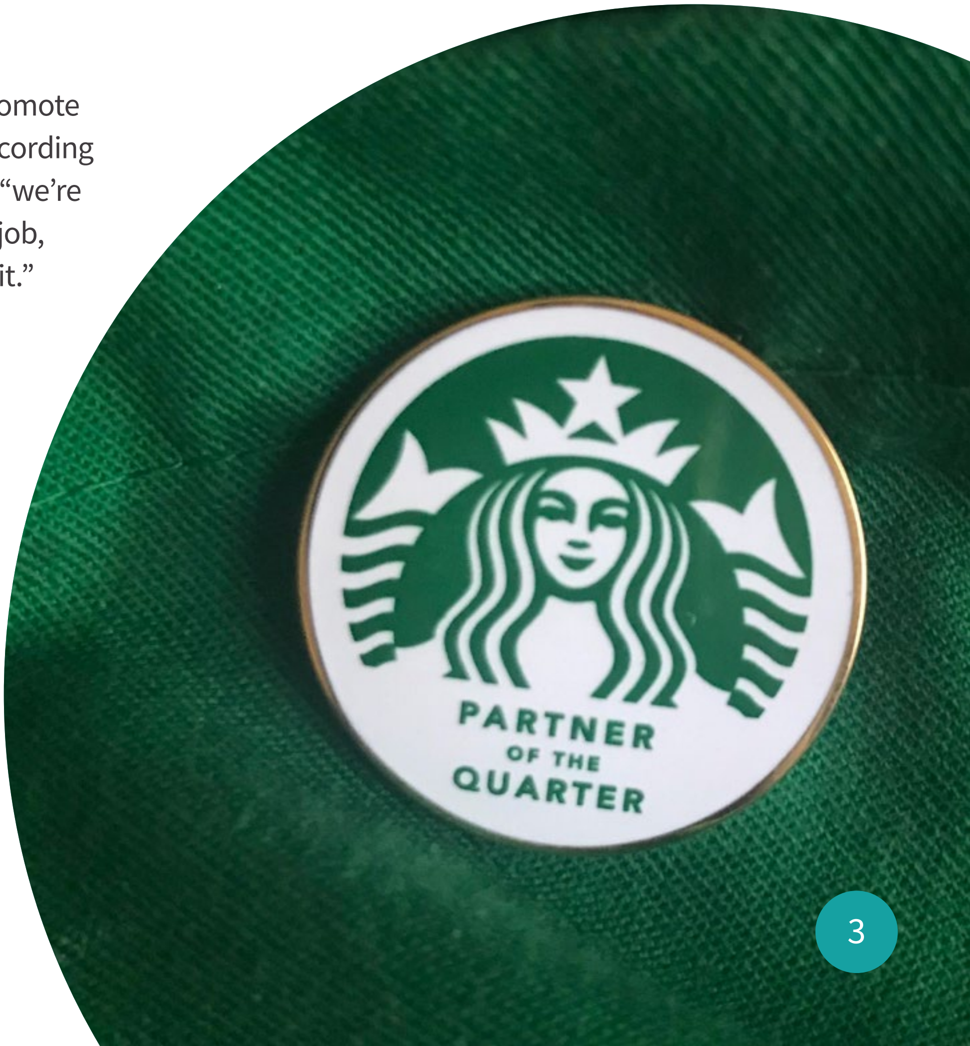
Some examples of program brands are:

Starbuckspartners

Starbucks call those employees who promote the brand on social media, partners. According to their guidelines for social media use, "we're called partners because this isn't just a job, it's our passion. So go ahead and share it."

Reebok

Reebok employees are encouraged to share pictures of themselves wearing Reebok products. Their less-than-corporate hashtag for this is #FitAssCompany.



Vodafone

Vodafone's employee advocacy program is called Go Social – it says exactly what you need to know.

Sky

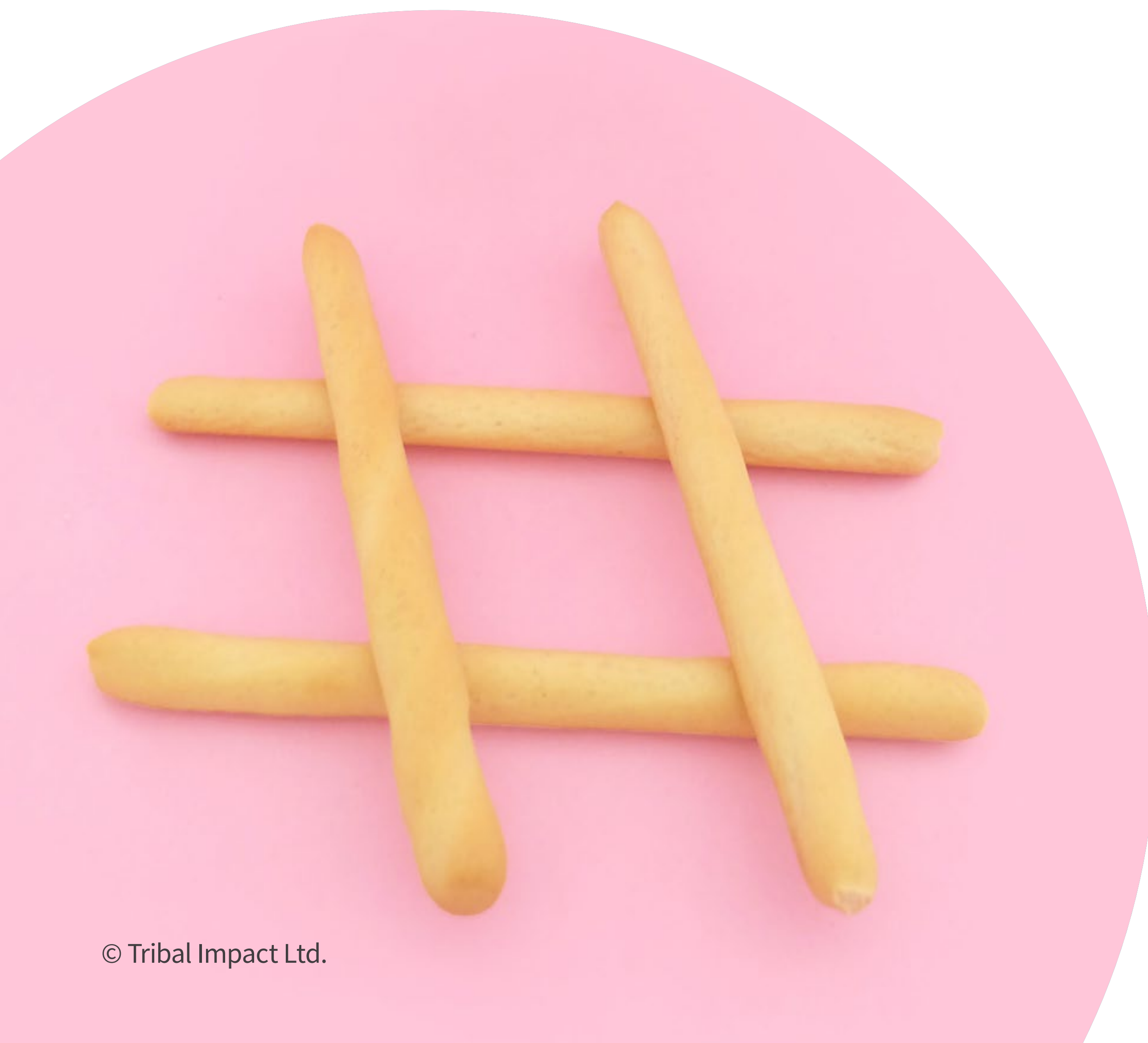
Sky chose the hashtag #LifeAtSky, a popular one among many organisations, easy to remember and very self-explanatory.

AT&T

AT&T refer to their SocialCircle, another example of a brand that gives users a feel for what's expected. Employees are given guidelines but encouraged to be authentic to their own voice.

Once you've got a strong brand, use it to promote the program. It should appear on everything including emails, your intranet and posters around the office. Remember, you want something that creates a buzz and grabs attention. Often organisations will use just the name of the tool they've purchased but this isn't usually engaging enough and can feel generic rather than being a brand that makes sense for your organisation and ties into the overall brand.

Have some fun with this – especially if you're planning a refresh or a relaunch of a program that is stumbling – ask the employees to make suggestions or run a competition.



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Set Goals Based On Your Data

After the initial period of your program, you will have collected some data. This data will tell you a story of where the blockages are and where things aren't flowing as well as they could be.

At Tribal, the thing we hear most from struggling organisations is "not enough people are signing up. We're not getting enough interest." We also hear about people signing up for the program and then either doing nothing or only sharing something once. Equally, participants can be quite the opposite and share so much they are at risk of spamming their audience. The ideal user is someone who regularly adds value to their network, the same as can be said for any social media activity.

Once you've identified behaviours and blockages that need fixing, it's time to set some goals for your program. Some examples of quick wins which will drive immediate improvements are:

- Onboarding new users in a consistent way to assist with generating regular activity and engagement
- Onboarding new active users to increase activation rates and to pick up people who've forgotten how to use the tool
- Increasing engagement per share, or click per share, ratio. Useful if the posts aren't really getting any engagement, perhaps because they are too frequent or not quite on message

Bigger goals can also be set, around how much traffic is being driven to the website and conversion rates (are the employee generated posts converting better than other posts?) These goals will really help focus the program and identify what you want to achieve. It's important to set them against the things that will materially change the performance of the program, rather than worrying too much about vanity metrics, such as impressions or likes.

It's key that you set the right goals at this stage – the overall success of the program should be your focus. Use the data, interpret what it is telling you and react to that.

Once set, these goals can be communicated to the executive sponsor of the program and will help with the next step to success.

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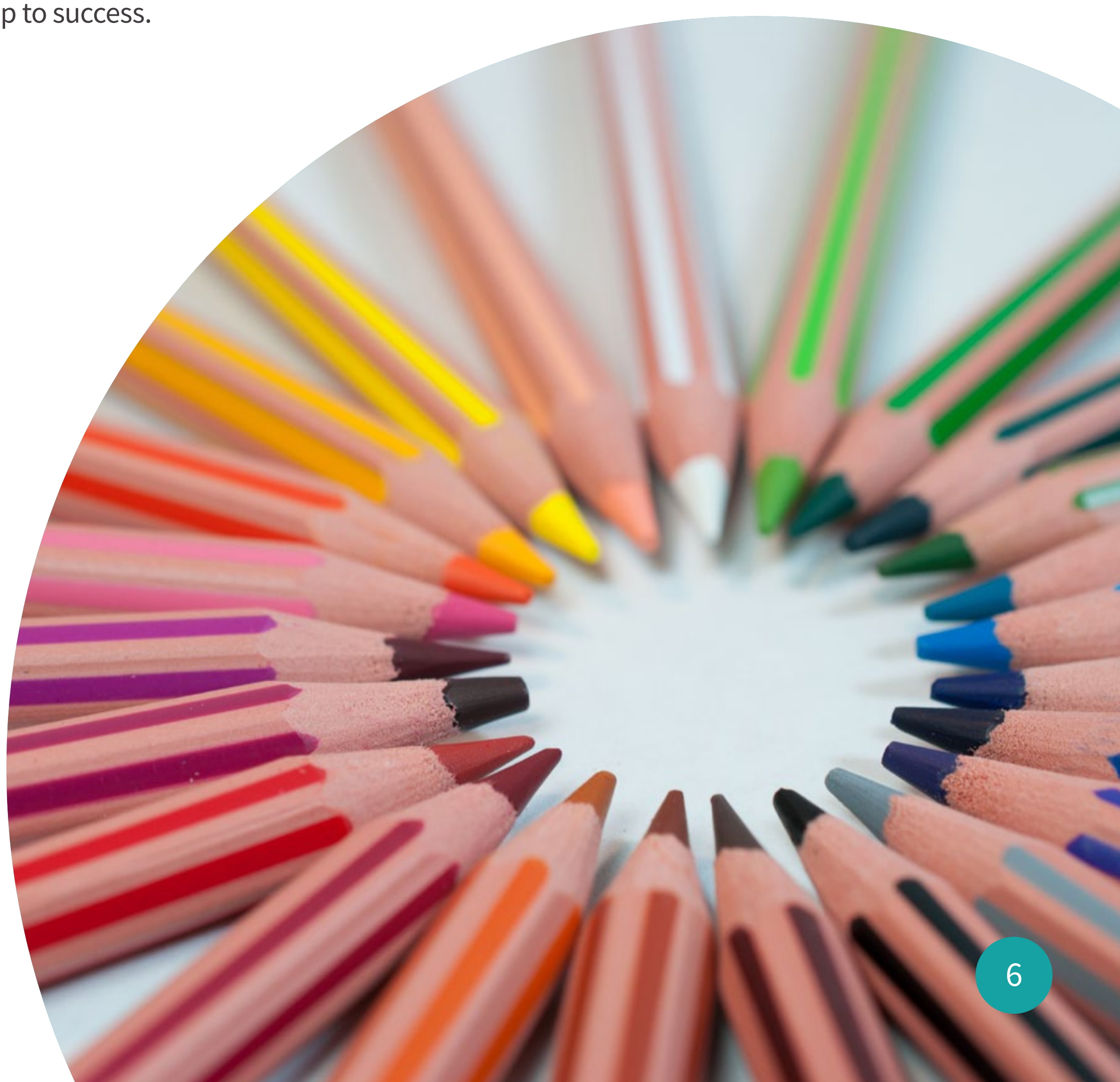

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Set Up A Training Program

Now that you've looked at the data and set goals, you'll need to implement some behaviour changes to start reaching for success. Employee advocacy is all about training, tools and content. It's all too easy to purchase the tool, fill it with content, give everyone a training session to set them off and then sit back and wait for the benefits.

Building a training program is a more complex task than it sounds. There are several layers of complexity that need considering if you want to produce something that is really going to impact the results of your program positively:

The Different Types Of Training

- Make your people aware of each stage of the advocacy program and help them to understand what they should be doing and how. Communicate the process and purpose of the program and align people with the basics of using it. How is what they do going to benefit them and the brand? What are the boundaries and what is expected/not expected?
- There might be some background training, such as how to optimise a LinkedIn profile or how to build and scale your network. These things need putting in order before people start to share, otherwise they won't be getting the wider reach and profile that you want for them and the brand.
- Behavioural training might be needed initially to set standards and then again at intervals to correct and refine the way people are using the tool. Focus on those at each end of the spectrum – spammers and dormant users – but also remind everyone of the boundaries usage guidelines if they start to fall foul of those.

The Different Types Of People

- Everyone learns differently. How you like to do your training will depend on your lifestyle, your place of work, the way you are motivated and your age.
- You may be more visually driven and like to see images and workflows, or you might prefer just to listen.
- Demographics will also come into this – millennials might do their training on their mobile phone in the evening, a baby boomer might want to learn quite differently.

The Different Types Of Roles

- You also need to think about how people will apply the training. What role do they have in the organisation and how does this affect the way they will use the tool and the content?
- Training needs to make things as real as possible for the users, so a social seller might need an entirely different session to an influencer.

To help with the design of your training program, use data from your tool:

Identify Behaviour Trends

Firstly, your tool will tell you what behaviours are being exhibited by your users. Are they sharing infrequently, frequently, or going overboard and spamming their audience? Did they sign up and then do nothing? Set up bespoke training sessions to give the right message to adjust each group of behaviours.

At Tribal, we have a training philosophy that we refer to as 'train the masses, train the many, train the few'. Applying this model means we always train the right people in the right way.

To train the masses, you need self-serve e-learning sessions, perhaps tied in to prompts that your tool can send – "we see you've only shared once on LinkedIn – here's a 5 minute e-learning module for you to take a look at." Your training platform need to be mobile friendly as well – you might not be the sort of business where people can jump on a PC to take their training, so you need to consider this when building your program.

Training the many is about targeting advanced training at a certain selection of people. The best approach for this is webinars or workshops.

Training the few means delivering very targeted learning for specific individuals. For example, you might choose subject matter experts or home-grown influencers or even your executive team. When training the few, do so through one-to-one sessions.

Additional Training Needs

Secondly, your tool can give you an insight into the size of networks your users have.

If 50% of your registered users have less than 500 connections on LinkedIn, for example, you can add some training about how to build their network.

It's worth considering using some of your champion advocates to deliver some of this background training. Sometimes, teaching the finer points of nurturing a network or how to engage with your audience is best delivered using real examples and your champions can share their best practice. This also gives them some profile within the organisation so can act as further motivation for them as individuals.

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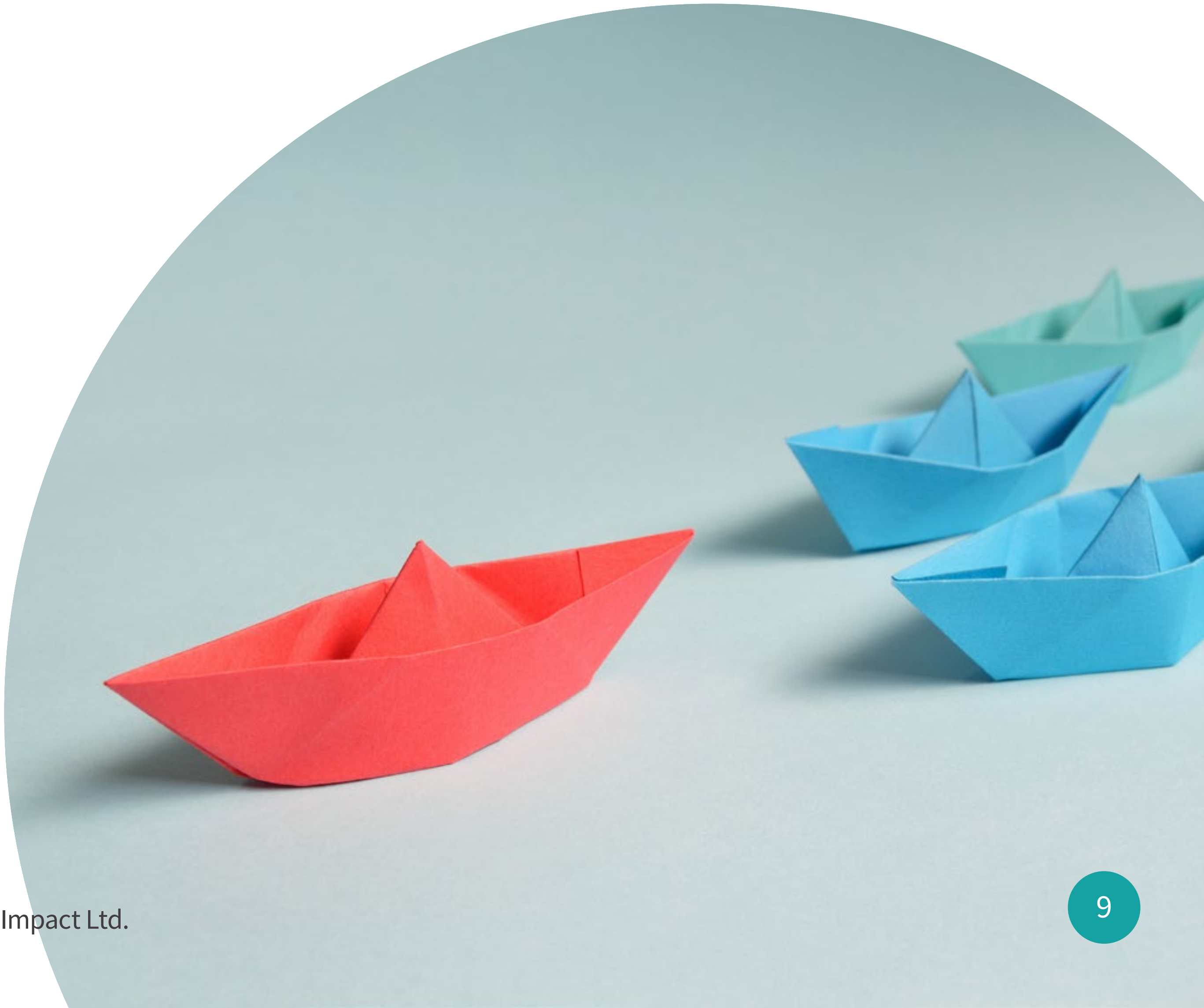

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Improve Your Onboarding

Refreshing your employee advocacy program is a great time to create a slick onboarding process to support the adoption of the program as soon as people join the business. When you initially launched, the tool vendor probably encouraged you to get everyone signed up and using the system as quickly as possible.

Now, you want to take a planned approach to ensure people can understand the purpose of the program and how the tool works in detail. This approach is far more likely to result in consistent, long-term use that really benefits your employees and the brand.

Consider what people really need before they get started. They will need to spend some time understanding your social media policy – being part of an advocacy program is different to sitting on the sofa checking FaceBook, liking and commenting. You want your users to be adding value, posting and reacting in a supportive, but also authentic, way.

At Tribal, we talk a lot about social media maturity levels. You might have an online training session that enables you to capture where your new starters are in their social media journey. If so, this is a great place to start. It's important to be very clear about what can and can't be said before letting people loose on social media, from both a brand and individual perspective.

A common problem with employee advocacy programs that have stalled, is a lack of detailed training on the tool itself. Often, new starters will just be allowed to find their own way but that's not easy and, if they can't work out how to use the tool properly, the chances are they'll lose interest or make mistakes, neither of which will result in a successful program.

This approach makes it easy for people to see what they need to do and that will encourage them to be active.

Some tools will allow you to use some automation to make things easier. For example, you could ask the tool to select people who joined but haven't achieved the 5 steps within a month. It will then email them to remind them of what they need to do or even to direct them to refresher training if they're stuck.

One idea is to put together a '5 step onboarding' process. Tell people how to get themselves up and running with the tool. It might look something like this:

1. Pick Your Categories
2. Link Your Social Media Accounts
3. Read And Engage With Content (Like Things)
4. Share Content
5. Contribute Content

5

Identify Who Owns What

This is another area where teams really struggle, and it can easily derail the success of a program. You can't run advocacy by committee. Decision making, budget management and supplier relationships all need to be controlled in one place to ensure the program is successfully embedded and allowed to run without unnecessary delays or obstacles.

It's fine to start with a team of dedicated volunteers – that is the most likely scenario for these programs in our experience. Advocacy is not yet considered strategic enough to have a dedicated team but that doesn't stop you finding a dedicated sponsor.

The most popular department for sponsorship or ownership seems to be marketing. This is perhaps because marketing is typically responsible for content and also owns influencer marketing and your employee advocates are really micro-influencers.

Here are some suggestions of the volunteer team members you need and where you might select them from within the organisation:

Administrators

Responsible for onboarding people into the program and ensuring they are activated, ie with licences, passwords, and access to training. Naturally, these people might sit within the HR team or Communications.

Curators

You can use RSS feeds to bring automated content into your advocacy tool but member-contributed content often outperforms it. Curators are employees who are responsible for contributing content to the platform. Each category on the platform should be publishing 1 to 3 pieces of new content per day so this role is a little more active than the administrators.

The best way to identify these people is to find your topic experts, especially those with a presence on social media. Then, check your data to find out who is getting good engagement on what they share. You can then develop these individuals to the next stage of social maturity by helping them to find and contribute their own content.

Users

Don’t forget about the beating heart of your program. Remember to continually offer training and improvement opportunities to keep the motivation and momentum going.

Influencers

These are those within your organisation who are considered influential to your target buyers. They could be technical experts or members of the leadership team. Find out how you can best utilise their high profile (not forgetting that they won’t necessarily be in your program). You could feature them in some of your marketing with interviews or special blog posts.

6

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

Communicating To Leaders

A major part of getting your employee advocacy program back on track is convincing your leaders that there needs to be continual investment for things like training. Your toolkit to convince them should include:

- Clear communication of the reasons for failure
- Plan to reactivate the platform – how will you fix it?
- Goals set from strong data
- Funding sources

Often, we find that an early error is to purchase too many licences. It's therefore not a bad idea to scale these back and reinvest the funds to deliver the relaunch. By making these licences harder to come by, you can incentivise the users to perform at a certain level.

Communicating To The Business

Make sure you then create a communication plan to ensure you commit everyone to the changes. Work with your communications team to work out which existing channels you can use, such as digital displays, posters, internal events like 'lunch and learn' with your star users, webinars, or even some branded goodies to celebrate your best participants.

Consider interviewing some of your top users to get their story and what benefits they've seen personally. You can then promote these on the intranet.

In summary, you need to raise the energy around the program and re-incentivise people to get involved.

7

Track And Measure

It’s important to move away from impressions, likes and engagements – the so-called vanity metrics.

Instead you need to dig deeper into the data. Look beyond your high-level dashboard as this will give you more details. For example, are users continually sharing the same bits of content? Additionally, you need to consider the member behaviours that we discussed earlier; spammers or dormant users need to be retrained and re-engaged.

They won’t necessarily show up in the headline data so make sure you interrogate to get the true story. Doing this is what completes the training-performance-outcomes-analysis circle and will really reinforce a positive relaunch of your program.

You should also consider content performance. What is being shared (what do the users like)? What is being engaged with (what does the audience respond to)? Most importantly, are these two things the same? If not, you’ve got a problem with a lack of targeted content.

Good tracking and measuring is about being holistic in your view of things. Is your advocacy program having any impact in the wider business? Is the organisation seeing pay-per-click savings, for example? What’s your website traffic doing?

To summarise, there are three categories of metrics that you should be considering:

- User metrics
- Content metrics
- Wider metrics

Summary

In summary, employee advocacy is about three things: tools, content and training. It is very common for businesses to invest in a tool, fill it with content and stand back to wait for the magic to happen. Training is probably the single most important element of a successful employee advocacy program.

It is definitely the only way to ensure longevity in your program as there will always be new starters and the seasoned advocates will be reaching new levels of expertise and have new training requirements to help them continue to grow.

Employee advocacy is a process, not a destination. If you can set up a clear process, get each element listed above right, and continue to track and measure what's working and what's not, you'll be rewarded with a quality program that delivers results right to the bottom line.

Contact Us For More Information

We specialise in B2B social media advocacy driving higher lead conversion and faster revenue growth by mobilising your most credible and trusted brand voice on social media. Employees.

We provide a range of services and training around social selling, employee advocacy, expert influencer blogging and executive social coaching.

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