



Social Business Exchange Research Report

The priorities, trends and motivations
of Social Business Practitioners



www.tribalimpact.com
[@tribalimpact](https://twitter.com/tribalimpact)



At Tribal, we take pride in advancing our practice through continuous learning. We're excited to share new insights with you from a recently commissioned piece of research into the world of Social Business leaders and practitioners.

Working with Tribal Affiliate Partner, Brands Rising, we've evaluated a range of social business-related topics to better understand the most common challenges and support desired by those who currently lead Social Business projects and programs.

Our research covered:

1. Identifying topics and trends of most interest to Social Business professionals
2. Understanding the operating level, motivations and learning preferences of the respondents seeking Social Business education and training
3. Understanding the value, needs and expectations of a Social Business exchange forum

Research Introduction by Susan Emerick

3

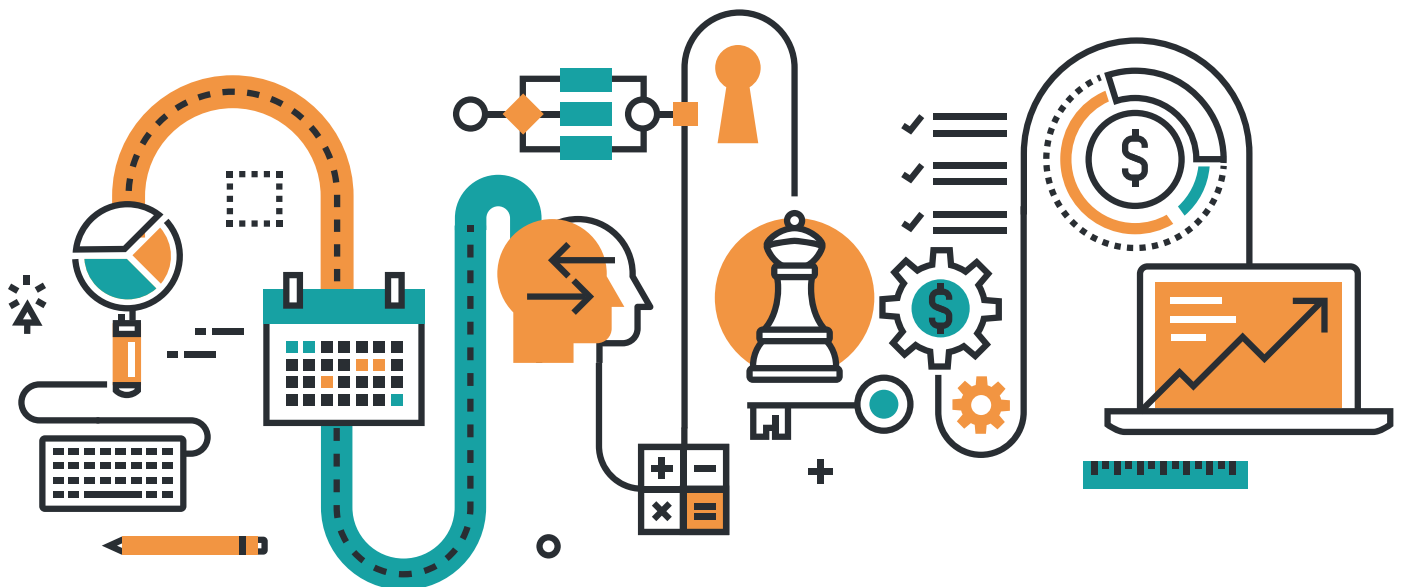


This research was undertaken by Tribal Impact and Brands Rising to advance our understanding of interest topics most sought after amongst Social Business practitioners and program leaders.

We evaluated these interest areas to determine priorities and motivations that would inform education and learning methods that could be delivered through a Social Business Exchange Community.

Collaborating on this research allowed us to evaluate our collective knowledge and understanding based on years of experience working directly with Social Business leaders. This allowed us to validate foundational needs, relevant topics of interest and

preferred access methods for learning amongst Social Business program leaders. Additionally, our research plan was designed to determine preferred access and content delivery methods for peer-to-peer networks.



Overview of Practitioners

Who's in charge?



Our respondent profile indicated that more than half of those leading Social Business initiatives are aligned within the marketing function of the organisation. This is likely attributed to the marketing function being held accountable for measuring results and expected to tie social program execution activity back to existing KPIs and targets. For example, connecting social business programs back to web traffic referrals, conversion rates and determining influenced pipeline via marketing automation and CRM systems.

In addition, marketing professionals are often engaged in understanding, mapping and determining opportunities across the buyer journey stages; supporting each stage with relevant content and creating thought leadership material that serves to educate and inform audiences who are conducting online research.

Program Leaders



The evaluation of role levels showed that the largest group was comprised of Management, followed by Individual Contributors, with Executive leadership trailing last. Perhaps a surprising result for such large-scale change programs that need leadership to support, influence and drive change holistically across the organisation.

What we don't know from this research is whether the management-level program leaders have an executive sponsor, without which rolling out and scaling the program could be very difficult.

Geographical Challenges



According to respondents, we found that **nearly 40%** were driving a program globally for their organisation. In our experience, regionally led programs are more likely to be responsive to cultural norms and attributes, while providing the ability to adapt to needs of the region. However, supporting such local customs may present challenges, such as optimising efforts, and securing resources may become difficult.

Additionally, duplication of effort, inability to standardise outcomes and the use of multiple tools isn't an efficient use of resources.

For organizations which operate internationally, it's vital that program leaders argue the case for a global role; the opportunity is clearly there, and the cost and resource savings should mean a business case is compelling.

1. Social Business Topics of Interest

This research found that Social Business practitioners are most engaged around the following topics:

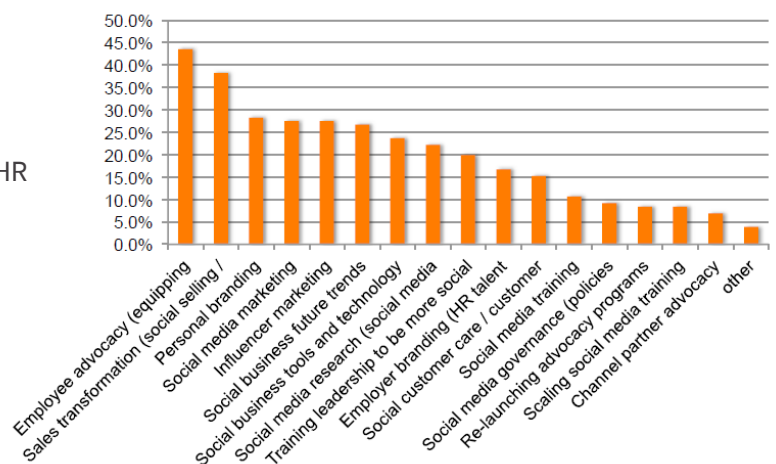
- **Employee advocacy**
- **Social selling**
- **Personal branding**
- **Social media marketing**
- **Influencer marketing**
- **Social Business future trends**

When we separated out the qualitative interview results from the overall results, practitioners were also interested in Employer Branding - HR talent acquisition and recruiting.

Employer Branding can hugely benefit from a Social Business culture when it comes to recruiting and retaining talent. From our research, it appears that HR practitioners are starting to understand the wider impact of such programs and are curious to learn more.

In connection with this observation, our qualitative interviewees also revealed the desire to learn and understand more about 'Social Business future trends'. This suggests that practitioners may soon be looking forward to the sustainability and longevity of their Social Business programs. This is certainly a trend we're noticing as we work with clients, Employee Advocacy and Social Selling programs are beginning to converge. A notable indicator of this shift is the integration between LinkedIn Sales Navigator and LinkedIn Elevate (advocacy tool).

■ Of the following, what social business related topics are of most interest? (Select top 3-5 from the list below) - Selected Choice



Tribal Thoughts

Surprisingly, influencer marketing was ranked lower down in the priority list of topics on the Social Business practitioner agenda. This suggests that organisations haven't yet recognised the benefit of expert employees as influencers and how they can provide beneficial support to advocacy programs.

According to Edelman Trust Barometer 2019, employees are considered one of the most trusted voices when it comes to B2B buying decisions. There's no better time

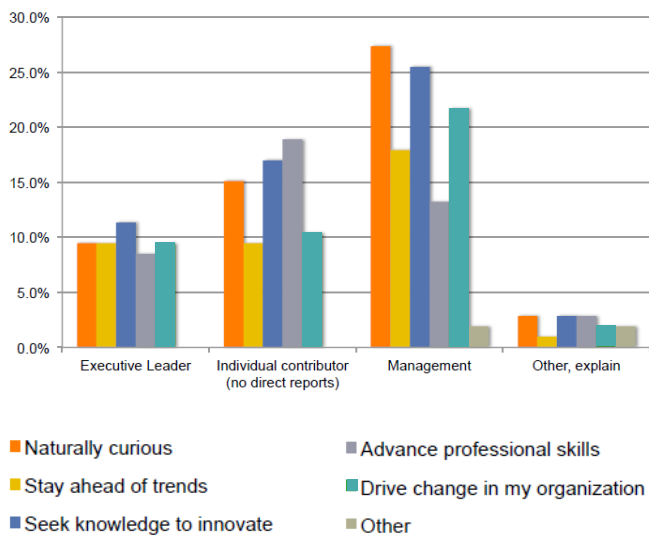
to activate expert employees and help them build their influence online around specific topics.

Traditional influencer marketing focuses the budget on external influencers. Consider redirecting some of that investment towards enabling employees to build their influence. Nurturing influence from within your organisation is a competitive differentiator that brings long-term value to the brand.

2. Motivations and learning preferences

Our research showed that while Social Business practitioners express a natural curiosity, they also have a healthy appetite for seeking knowledge to innovate.

Nearly 50% of respondents said seeking knowledge to innovate was a learning motivation for them, followed very closely by their natural curiosity. However, the interesting view on these results came when we drilled down into the motivations when correlated to the job level of the respondents.



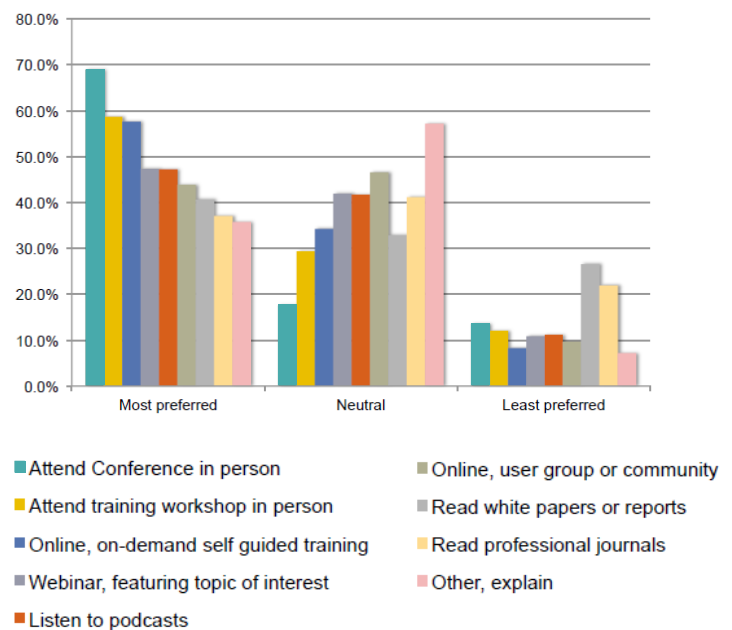
Management-level Social Business practitioners were far more likely to express the highest degree of desire to seek knowledge to innovate – double that of the executive-level respondents. For the management-level practitioners, seeking knowledge to innovate, their natural curiosity and the desire to drive change in their organisation stood head and shoulders above any other motivation.

Individual Contributors were motivated by advancing their professional skills, a trait perhaps not surprising in individuals who may be looking for their next role or career advancement. Exploring training opportunities to build skills and demonstrate professional readiness for advancement, may be a common motivator for this group.

The motivations for executive-level leaders were evenly spread with ‘seeking knowledge to innovate’ coming out on top. This is rather surprising given the importance of Social Business transformation and how it impacts the entire organisation. Out of all the seniority groups, we expected executive-level leaders to be most passionate about driving change within their organisation.

We also looked at learning styles under a theme of ‘learning from others’. The research revealed the most preferred learning styles were face-to-face opportunities, such as attending a conference or training workshop. However, perhaps in reference to the continual learning need when rolling out a new way of working, the option of online, on-demand, self-guided training also scored highly.

Reading white papers, reports and professional journals were the least preferred method of learning. Considering the level of information overload, and the fast-paced, continually changing environment, practitioners are more likely to seek out ways to learn from others’ experience, lessons and best practices they’re willing to share, rather than comb through raw material from which they can draw their own conclusions.



2. Motivations and learning preferences

Tribal Thoughts

It's clear that the management-level program leaders are the change makers of the future. Their energy and drive is evident in our survey results. In our experience, we have also noticed common traits among these changemakers:

- **They're comfortable with data** – analysing, interpreting and actioning against it
- **They're good communicators** – they communicate at all levels of the organisation
- **They're empathetic** – they tailor value messages depending on who they're working with
- **They're socially active** – they're practitioners and use social media themselves
- **They're driven** – they believe in the value they contribute to the business

The other overwhelming outcome from our research is the desire for practitioners to meet others facing similar challenges and learn from one another.

However, a theme shared by respondents throughout the research was that credibility of the source was of paramount importance. Practitioners at all levels expressed their appetite for sharing best practices, with practitioners who've had experience leading social business programs for their organizations, and placed high value on opportunities for learning from someone who has been in their shoes.



“ In my experience, Social Business practitioners are seeking opportunities to share their challenges and triumphs with those who've been in the trenches. They're sceptical of forums that don't provide the opportunity to share openly and seek guidance freely without consequence. This research validates and provides affirmation of the types of collaboration and learning opportunities most sought after by Social Business practitioners. ”

- Susan Emerick

3. The value of exchanging experience and lessons learned

One focus of our research was to understand the importance, or value, placed on peer-to-peer forums. People traditionally take part in a range of forums, either related to particular interests, research or task-oriented groups, or vocational, where they might network with peers and take part in focused discussion. What became very clear through the research, was the absolute requirement for credibility across all types of forums.

Social Business practitioners want to learn from others experiencing a common journey. Learning was very much the priority, outstripping even the opportunity to network, with the majority of respondents saying they would like to attend a conference or similar meet up. So, any social business exchange forum would need to provide such learning opportunities as part of its offering.

Practitioners want to...

“

Connect with like minded people, share what you are good at and learn from their expertise & experiences.

”

Tribal Thoughts

When designing any learning experience, we must be mindful of different learning styles. Some people prefer classroom style training while others learn more effectively from accessible mobile courses they can watch on the move. Since five generations are now present within the workforce (Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Y and Z) we need to be more mindful than ever of how this impacts consumption of information.

Successful learning experiences will consist of a blended style, including mentoring, 1-2-1 coaching, live webinars, animations, worksheets, templates, and cheat sheets; a good mix of resources that will appeal to

a wider audience. Interactive e-learning based on bite-sized modules focused around tackling certain behaviours is also very popular.

At Tribal Impact we also host a twice-yearly Social Business Exchange event organised specifically for practitioners in Employee Advocacy, Social Selling and Social Recruitment. This experience was designed with a sole focus on education and business networking, therefore no sales pitches are allowed. Events like this provide a less formal opportunity for social business professionals to exchange their knowledge and network with their peers from different companies.

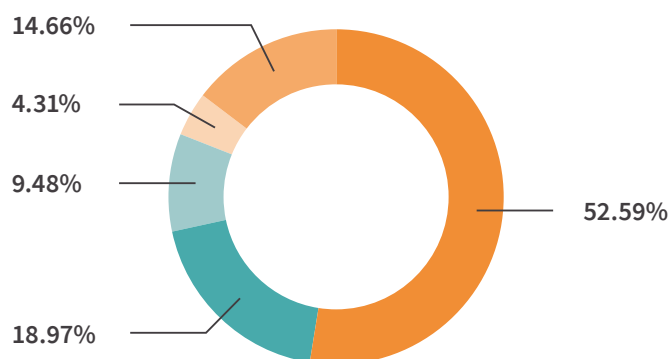


Research Overview

We sought respondents who met the following criteria:

- Currently leading a Social Business-related program or initiative within their organisation
- Holds position in marketing, sales or communications
- Has a designated role of executive, manager, or individual contributor (no direct reports)
- Organisation size of 1,000+ employees
- In the United States of America or Europe

We conducted qualitative, in-depth interviews and received over 170 online survey responses in our quantitative sample.



Job Function:

- Marketing
- Communications
- Sales
- HR (Human Resources)
- Other

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**.

Learn more at www.tribalimpact.com

BY PHONE:

+44 (0) 208 123 1662

BY EMAIL:

hello@tribalimpact.com

OUR ADDRESS:

Tribal Impact Ltd,
Ground Floor Building 1000,
Lakeside North Harbour,
Western Road,
Portsmouth,
PO6 3EZ

Creating impact with...



Panasonic



HITACHI
Inspire the Next

STEWARTS

sapphire
software • services • solutions

+AdviserPlus

TIBCO



Wilmington plc

opentext™

united VARs

