



How to Turn Your Employees Into Your Biggest Advocates

themuse

Hiring a new employee is an investment.

Research says the process can take, on average, three weeks¹ to a month and a half and cost roughly \$4,000². Not to mention, if the new employee doesn't work out, you lose more than what you sunk into the first hiring process; there's also a loss of productivity until the subsequent new hire is up to speed.

Which means: Finding the right applicants the first time around saves you time and money.

And you know it's possible. You've met candidates whose values, work style, and experience are a strong fit, such that you could easily envision them adding to your culture. It's a positive hiring experience for everyone involved: They're excited to work at your company, and you can't wait for them to join the team.

But finding these value-add hires isn't a matter of fate—it takes strategy. You need to find a cost-efficient way to raise awareness of your employer brand and open positions, and you need the news to be delivered via a source candidates find trustworthy.

Enter: Employee advocacy.

¹ <https://www.fastcompany.com/3048421/why-the-hiring-process-takes-longer-than-ever>

² <https://www.shrm.org/about-shrm/press-room/press-releases/pages/human-capital-benchmarking-report.aspx>

The Power of Employee Advocacy

Employee advocacy is when your employees share all the things they love about working at your company—unsolicited, and with genuine enthusiasm—with their networks.

It's word-of-mouth marketing that benefits everyone. Your staff gains more exposure internally and externally, and builds their personal brand. Their efforts, in turn, build credibility for your employer brand—and draw in recruits who are more likely to add value to your company.

Think about it like this: When you want to try a new restaurant or stay at a hotel in a new city, you ask your friends for recommendations. You make a mental note when a contact says the new bistro in town is worth the hype, and you save a friend's Facebook post about a recent trip.

Employee advocacy applies the same logic to careers—because, if someone's going to do all of that research for a meal or a two-day stay, they're definitely going to study the ins and outs of where they'll spend 40+ hours a week for the foreseeable future.

In other words, job applicants are no longer learning about your company simply so they can give an impressive interview answer. They want to be informed consumers: Three out of four Millennials care about “culture fit.”¹ So, along with referring to job descriptions and the company website, candidates will also scour their networks—in person and online—to learn all they can.

And, through employee advocacy, you can use all of this to your benefit. You empower your employees to talk about working at your company, and they engage and inform prospective applicants.

¹ <https://www.inc.com/peter-economy/19-interesting-hiring-statistics-you-should-know.html>

The Proven Benefits of Employee Advocacy

Employee advocacy is more than just a trend: It's research-backed. Here are the stats on three major benefits:

Broader Candidate Pool

According to LinkedIn, "...research shows that, on average, employees collectively have social networks 10 times larger than a corporate brand does. That means your advocacy program can drastically extend your reach...[Additionally] employee shares are seen as more authentic than corporate shares, and people are more likely to engage with the content. Employee shares have double the click-through-rate of corporate shares.¹"

"Employees are the most trusted source of information when it comes to how companies treat both their staff and their customers."

In other words, when your employees share your news (be it a new initiative or open positions), they're able to reach a broader base of people. In turn, that base views them as a credible source, so they're more likely to click and learn more. This makes sense when you consider that, as the 2016 Edelman Trust Barometer reports: "Employees are the most trusted source of information when it comes to how companies treat both their staff and their customers."²



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Of course, employee advocacy doesn't just impact the total number of people you reach: It helps you find the right people. U.S. News & World Report confirms: "[65] percent of referred employees were very satisfied with job fit or their ability to fulfill the requirements of the position, and 50 percent were very satisfied with how well they fit within the company."³ This improves employee retention, which brings us to...

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¹ <https://business.linkedin.com/marketing-solutions/blog/linkedin-elevate/2017/what-is-employee-advocacy--what-is-it-for--why-does-it-matter->

² <http://www.edelman.com/insights/intellectual-property/2016-edelman-trust-barometer/>

³ <https://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2015/10/07/7-things-you-should-know-about-employee-referrals>

Stronger In-House Team

Statistically, referred employees stay at a company longer than candidates who come through other means⁴. This longevity builds cultural continuity.

But that's not all. When your current employees play a role in recruiting future members of your team, there's an instant connection between new hires and established staff who know your values and way of doing things. It increases dialogue between these two groups so values can endure and evolve in the way that most benefits your organization.

Additionally, employee advocacy creates a culture of sharing. Encouraging people to discuss their experience at the company helps them reach a broader base with your message—while simultaneously allowing them to grow their personal brand, and benefit from engaging with others in the space. We recommend companies provide training on storytelling, personal branding, and social media so your employees are equipped (and excited!) to share their work in a way that builds brand awareness for your company and adds value for your team.

Trusted Consumer Brand

When you empower—and train—your employees to discuss their work in the context of the industry, their efforts don't just impress prospective job applicants; they draw in future customers as well. Here's why:

More than half of all customers trust people they know (whereas less than a quarter believe traditional marketing efforts). Not just that, but: “word-of-mouth customers—those influenced by friends, family and social networks—are also very brand loyal: 67 percent will stay with a brand they like, compared to less than 50 percent of non-word-of-mouth customers.^{5”}

Taken all together: Employee advocacy helps you reach customers who'll find their word more authentic than other forms of advertising—and, once they're referred to your brand, they're more likely to stick around.



4 <https://www.jobvite.com/general-recruiting/new-data-what-you-didnt-know-about-employee-referrals/>

5 <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/ca/Documents/consumer-business/ca-en-consumer-business-customer-focused-growth.pdf> 5

Employee Advocacy in Action: Examples From Two Companies

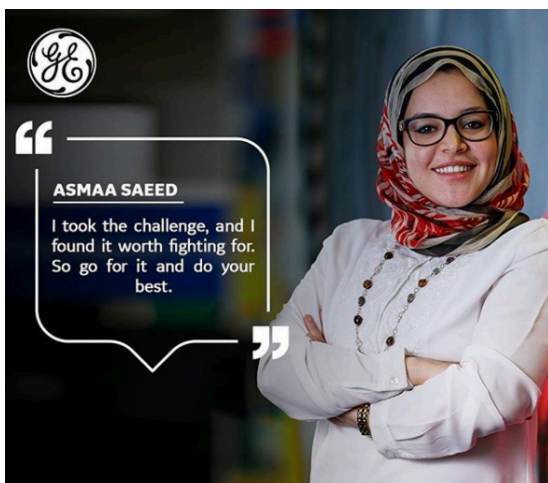
As you think about how employee advocacy could complement and advance your current recruiting efforts, you don't have to start at square one. You can learn (and borrow!) from companies that have already implemented it successfully. Let's look at two examples:

GE: An Emphasis on Social Media Training

GE provides extensive training for its employee advocates (whom they refer to as "Brand Ambassadors"). An initial session walks interested employees through optimizing their LinkedIn profile. It includes best practices for what to write, and includes answers to FAQs like what they can (and can't share) about the organization, as well as sample text for when someone contacts them about working at GE. By including additional slides on industry leaders to follow and resources, they make it clear the goal is to benefit employees as well.

From there, there are weekly tips emails and quarterly trainings, to help employees grow their social media influence and abilities.

GE gets it right. The training adds value for their current employees by teaching social media best practices (a.k.a., skills!). They encourage staff to be authentic, so they're more likely to buy-in and participate. They reach out with tips weekly, so the team is regularly reminded to share with their networks, which consistently grows brand awareness and increases candidate and consumer outreach (per the points above). Most importantly, by taking the time to explain what, why, and how; they're guiding their employees to have an online presence that reflects well on the company.



The Muse: Getting the Word Out There

At The Muse, one way we practice what we preach and support employee advocacy is by making it easy for our employees to share content. An easy-to-replicate example is our “Weekly Wins” email. The PR Team pulls together a selection of the prior week’s press mentions with context and sample content pre-drafted for Twitter and LinkedIn. This allows employees to access content they can immediately share to boost their—as well as our employer—brand, with little effort.

The Muse’s Director of PR & Communications, Tiffany Eckelberg advises keeping the email short (five or six stories—max—and if you don’t have that many press mentions yet, highlight pieces from your company blog). Second, write social media updates in brand voice, and don’t be afraid to reach out to marketing and PR teams to help. Third, get the C-suite to participate. In Eckelberg’s words “...engage your executive team and encourage them to share this content across their channels. Employees tend to take cues from senior leaders, so if your CEO or Founder is posting content regularly, chances are, your employees will follow suit.”

The “Weekly Wins” email takes the guesswork out of employee advocacy for team members. Employees often have the following questions: “Is it really OK to share posts about my company?” and “What exactly should I be saying?” Pre-writing status



Micah Day

Head of Sales - South/Midwest [I'm Hiring!]
1w

Building a culture of excellence is what we are doing here at [TheMuse.com](https://www.themuse.com). Tonight, we are so excited to be hosting our first ever sales hiring and networking meetup.

Attendees will have the opportunity to meet members of our sales leadership team, hear from top performers like [Monica Ball](#) and [Jesse Sanchez](#) (pictured below) about what it takes to consistently perform at a high level, and learn about sales opportunities at The Muse. We look forward to seeing you!

RSVP: <http://muse.cm/2elbNnw>



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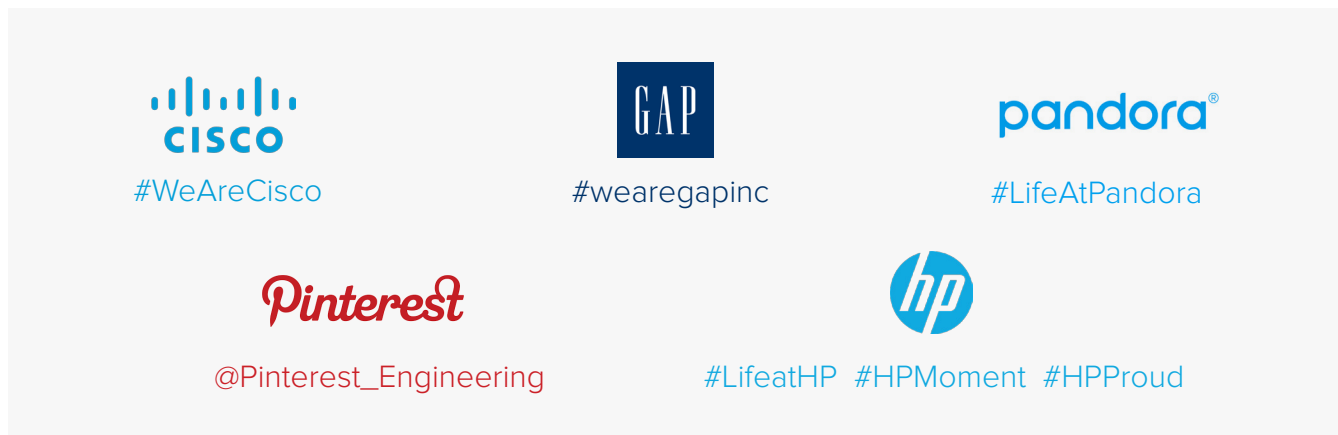
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Likes



updates—with the option to adjust them to their own voice for authenticity—gives team members the low-effort option to copy and paste. It helps members who want to share, but may be time-crunched or unsure what to post to feel confident in their role as a brand advocate. Overall, this initiative leads to greater shares, building awareness for future clients and candidates alike.

For more inspiration, here are additional examples of how top companies encourage employee advocacy across social media:



- Hewlett Packard has 4.1 million Facebook fans and encourages use of customized hashtags #LifeatHP, #HPMoment, and #HPProud.
- There are over 7,000 Instagram posts with Gap’s hashtag #wearegapinc.
- Pandora gives followers a “backstage pass to life, culture, and careers at Pandora” with the Twitter handle Life@Pandora and hashtag #LifeAtPandora
- Cisco has over 27,000 followers @WeAreCisco on Twitter, and with the hashtag #WeAreCisco, encourages people to “Be you, with us”
- Pinterest shares engineering tips as well as snapshots of company culture on Medium @Pinterest_Engineering.

As you think about how employee advocacy could work for you, remember that this list isn’t exhaustive. For the companies mentioned, featured initiatives are just one of numerous ways they build brand visibility. Other strategies range from thought-leadership guest posts to vouchers so staff can easily accept invitations for one-on-one informational coffee meetings, to +1 recruiting events, where current employees bring contacts to the workplace to network with the team. What matters is that you focus on making the experience genuinely beneficial for current employees, as well as potential recruits.

The Next Steps

While your end goal may be quality new hires, your starting point is your current employees. They're your greatest resource—both as far as reaching new people, as well as contributing to candid conversations surrounding your strengths as a company.

As a final thought, don't forget that you'll have many more people volunteering to share on your company's behalf if you live up to your promises to current employees. As career expert Liz Ryan explains: "Simply stated, if the employees don't feel good about the place, they're not going to subject to their friends to the environment. What kind of friend does that?"¹ The logic is the same with opposite premise: If you have an incredible work environment, your employees will recommend it organically!

When you remember that a positive culture matters just as much as how it's shared, employee advocacy becomes more than a cost-efficient strategy to attract new, value-add employees. It becomes a natural extension of what you're building for your current employees, so they're more than happy to share it.

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The Muse strives to make work more human by being a trusted resource for millions of people as they seek career satisfaction—not just another job. Companies partner with The Muse as they look to attract and retain the best talent by telling an authentic and compelling employer story. Our mission is to create meaningful connections between companies and candidates to make the world of work—from the job search to career development—more personal.

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BrandBuilder

The Muse's BrandBuilder allows companies to collect data and actionable insights on their culture, values, and employee experience by appealing to employees' desire to have powerful personal brands. In the words of self-declared Brand Nerd Lisa Cervenka: "BrandBuilder is a win for the employee and the company because both brands are elevated very authentically. By offering the tool to all employees, companies can see who raises their hand - our clients have likened it to finding 'needles in a haystack'.

LEARN MORE

¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lizryan/2015/01/23/the-truth-about-employee-referrals/#6bbf40634383>