2018

The Year of Social Advocacy in the Workplace

PostBeyond™ +

Table of Contents

> "It's about the
> tribe I belong to,
> not about me."

Abstract

A century of management science built off a manufacturing economy has done little to prepare executives for the new digitally disruptive, social terrains that they must now navigate. The time when company size equated with longevity has ended and with it, the social contract rewarding cautious stewardship with stability. There are many examples of social media, left to its own devices, playing out as a negative force. Consumers and employees, incented by finally having a voice – or perhaps at times by viral fame and fortune – can easily become modern revolutionaries, toppling careful enterprise stewards. One viral video has the capacity to destroy billions of dollars in shareholder value. While a defensive posture against these threats is not unwarranted, it is not the only (or best) option. Executives are now realizing it's equally possible that social media presents an enormous opportunity. Leaders who embrace this technology can marshal people globally on their mission like never before.

Leaders are rediscovering the benefits of employing workers not solely for their labor, but also for their full intellectual and social participation in the company mission. To discover why, and to uncover new best practices for organizations that realize this largely untapped potential, we conducted primary survey research of employees and management throughout the US and Canada on their usage, perceptions, and policies regarding social and mobile communication technologies in the workplace. Our findings were eye-opening:

▸ While over half of managers recognize the visibility gains and brand benefits of social advocacy, just 1 in 10 reports implementing a structured, comprehensive social media advocacy program as part of their digital strategy.

▸ Management opinion on the benefits of an Employee Advocacy Program vary widely. Notably, at the top of this list sits "building a shared sense of purpose," what we would refer to as leading the tribe.

▸ According to our findings, employees overwhelmingly approve of companies' social media posts, with the majority finding them informative, engaging, interesting, relatable, timely and of high quality.

▸ Employees are more likely to share company achievements than personal achievements. Company achievements are the most shared followed by company organized events.

The Challenge and Opportunity for Business Advocacy in 2018

Despite the hype, living and thriving in the new digital era can be a lonely business, particularly for traditional large-scale enterprises. Executive leadership, educated by over a century of management science built off the back of a manufacturing economy, can find this new terrain quite challenging to navigate. Pulling the right levers to optimize operations and fine-tuning engines to drive growth is often not enough. Disruptors in technology and social media are now constantly threatening and cajoling at the gate. Many leaders respond by searching for levers that do not exist, unsuccessfully commanding forces that lie outside their control. Others who cautiously welcome the change begin to see social media's opportunity, not only to embrace this but to use it to their full advantage. New management lessons emerge, most notably, the opportunity as never before to marshal their workforce on the mission they serve.

New leaders are rediscovering the tribal craft of accomplishing remarkable things, by employing workers not solely for their labor, but also for their full intellectual and social participation in the company mission. A new social contract is being formed between employer and employee, including shifting boundaries amongst workers, their leaders and their communities of belonging. New best practices emerge. In the research that follows, we report on our investigation into the current state of social media in business and what opportunities lie ahead for new leadership that can harness these forces for future organizational growth and stability.

Workers have always engaged in social networking, but the activity of storytelling workplace triumphs and resentments is now no longer limited to the dinner table, rather it is now often amplified publicly around the world. **Social technology has fundamentally changed the way employees interact with the world around them and with the organization that they belong.** Most notably for large enterprises, employee reach on social media translates into an "incredible power in the marketplace"[1] that sadly, many organizations overlook.[2]
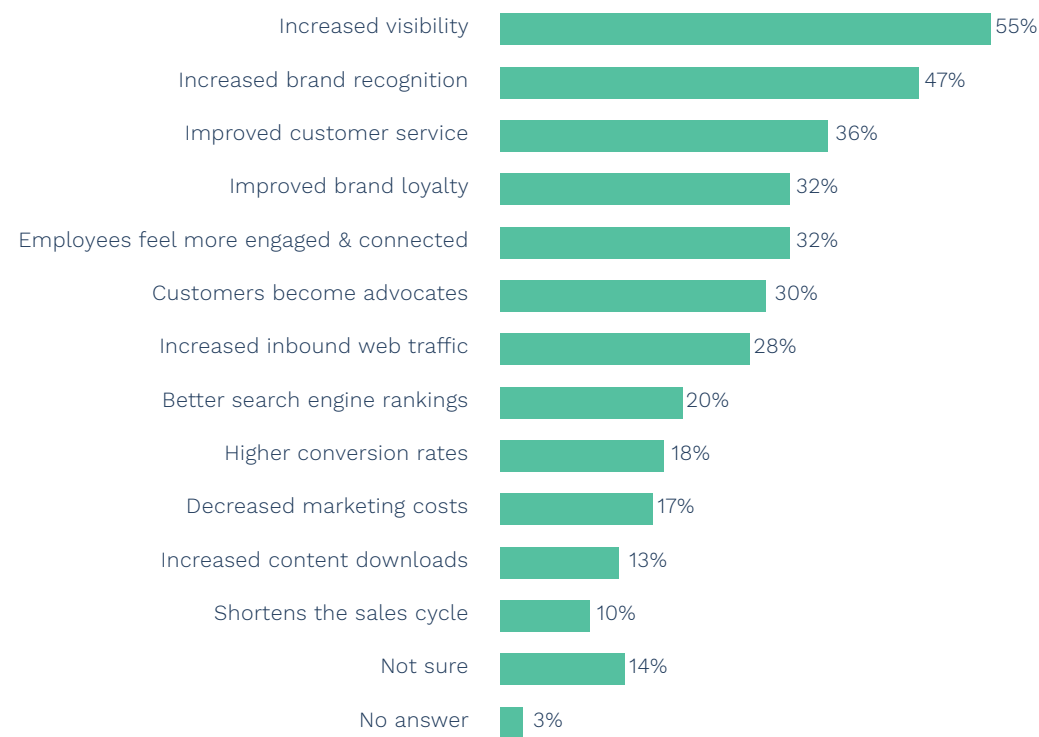
To discover why, and to uncover new best practices for leading organizations that realize this largely untapped potential, we conducted primary research of employees and management throughout the US and Canada on their usage, perceptions, and policies regarding social and mobile communication technologies in the workplace.

Harnessing the Power of the Tribe

Employers are not blind to current trends. They do recognize the power of social media for the brand as a whole, with management most often citing the opportunity to increase company visibility and brand recognition.

Company Benefits from Social Media

Management Survey (multi-pick)

Benefit	%
Increased visibility	55%
Increased brand recognition	47%
Improved customer service	36%
Improved brand loyalty	32%
Employees feel more engaged & connected	32%
Customers become advocates	30%
Increased inbound web traffic	28%
Better search engine rankings	20%
Higher conversion rates	18%
Decreased marketing costs	17%
Increased content downloads	13%
Shortens the sales cycle	10%
Not sure	14%
No answer	3%

Nonetheless, organizations have slowly started to harness the communicative and engaging power of social media through their employees. For our purposes, "Employee Advocacy" is defined as a program by which organizations encourage their staff to share information about the company on social media. Just half of managers surveyed across North America reported that their company has a formal Employee Advocacy Program.

Has Employee Advocacy Program (EAP)

Management Survey

- 38% No
- 13% Don't know
- 49% Yes
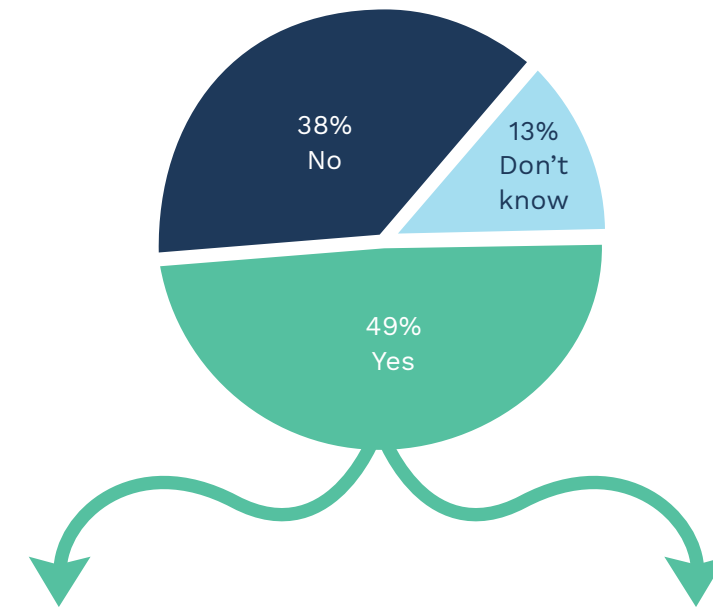
EAP Has Clearly Defined Strategy/Objective

- 12% Don't know
- 6% No
- Yes 66%
- 15% Yes, one individual does this
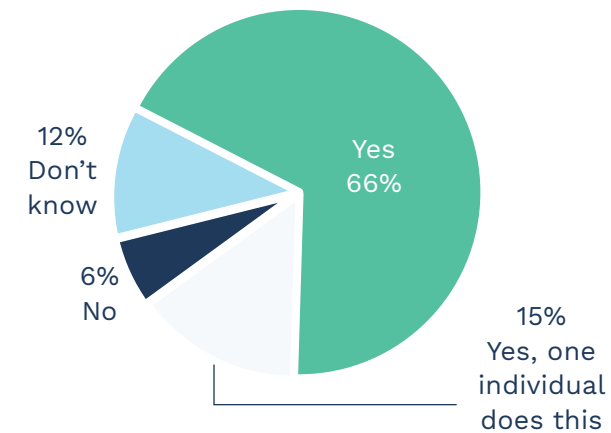
EAP Has Point Person or Resource

- 10% Don't know
- 14% No
- 76% Yes
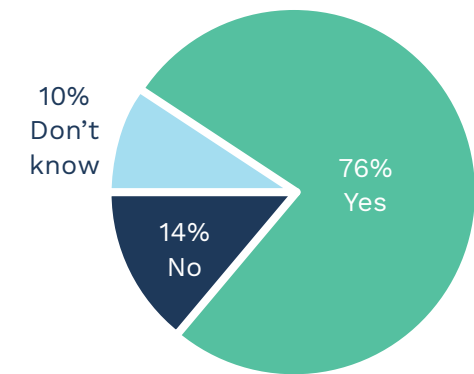
Of those companies, 76% have put resources towards it. Previous research found that few brands reported having mature Employee Advocacy programs with strategic impacts, but that many were beginning to make it a priority. In 2014, there was a reported 191% increase in interest.[3] From our current research, we find still only a third of companies have a defined Employee Advocacy Program.

When asked further if their company's digital strategy included a formalized approach to social media, just over 1 in 10 reported implementing a structured, comprehensive social media program.

Implemented a formal comprehensive social media program	13%
Currently doing pilot testing on different approaches	11%
Firm actively considering options for EE on social media	15%
Firm is not considering EE on social media	30%
Don't know	31%

Management Survey   EE=Employee Engagement

Given the slow rate of adoption toward social media, it is not surprising that there is little uniformity across companies on which department typically oversees it.

Department Running Social Media
Employee Survey

Operations	16%
Internal Communication	16%
Sales	13%
Social Media Department	10%
Senior management	8%
Owner	7%
Customer Services	7%
HR	7%
Marketing	6%
No specific Function	6%
IT	5%

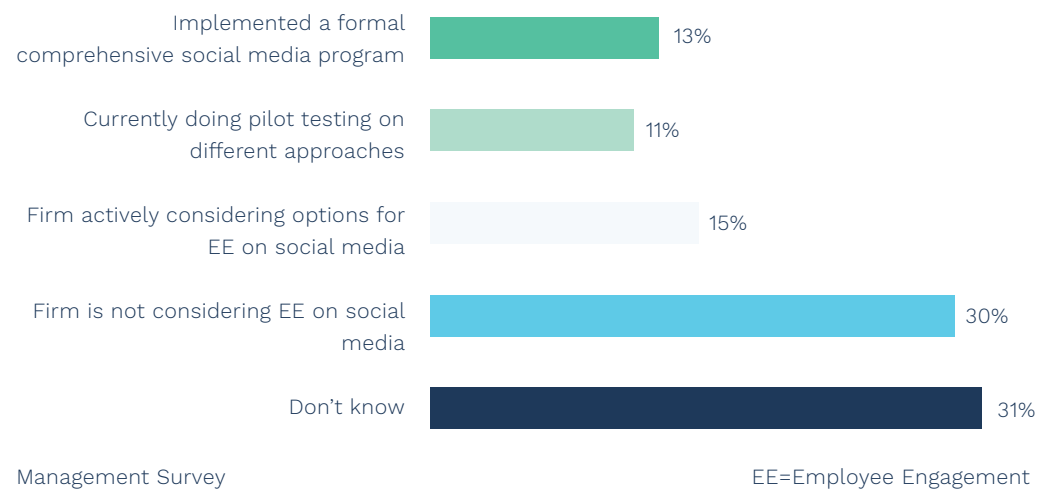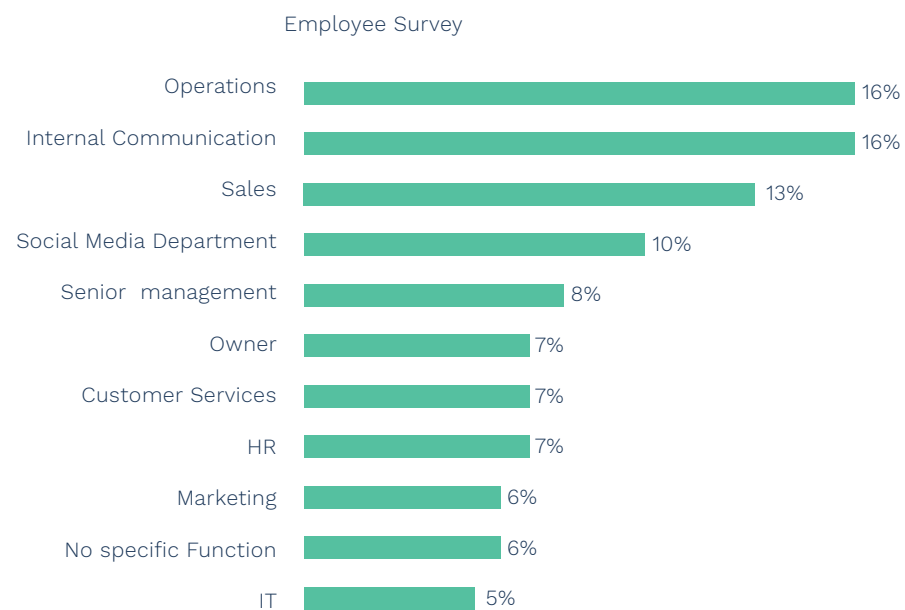Only half of large companies have a centralized department that sets rules and manages external communications through social media. Almost a quarter of the time governance is a central policy, but individual units oversee their external communications.

Who Manages Social Media
Management Survey

One dept. sets rules and does all external comms.	51%
One dept. sets rules buts depts. then provide their own external comm.	23%
Various depts. have own rules and provide own external comm.	15%
We don't have a formal process.	11%
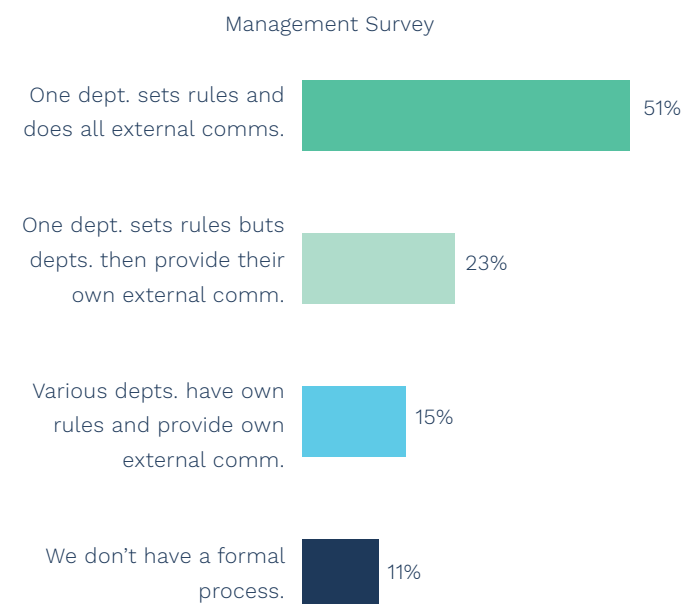
How Social Media is Managed
Management Survey

We use one corporate technology	31%
We use several different technologies	38%
Employees are left to their own devices	12%
We do not use any technology in this area	5%
Not sure	14%
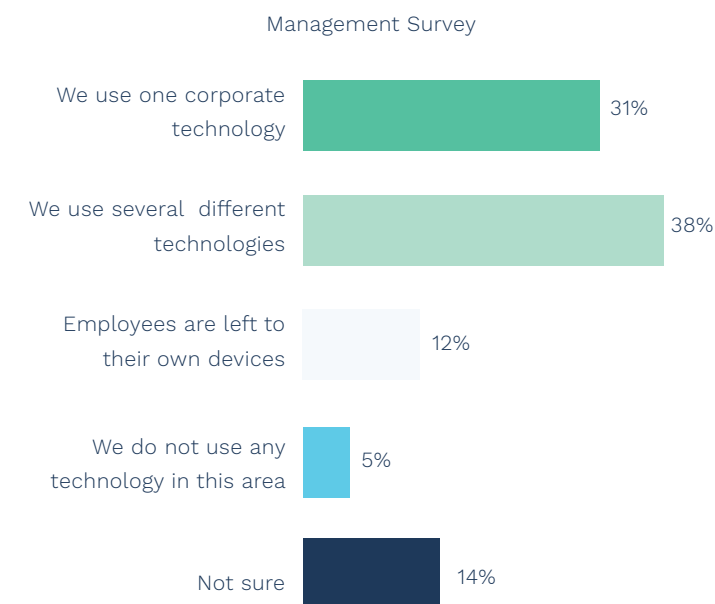
Advocacy: A Leadership Necessity

Consistent with the diffusion of responsibility across organizational functions, management opinion on the benefits of an Employee Advocacy Program vary widely. Notably, "building a shared sense of purpose," what we would refer to as leading the tribe was considered a key benefit. Its essence speaks to charismatic authority versus formal or legal authority, a notion central to making a company's social media voice authentic, relevant and of interest to others.

Main Benefit of Effective Employee Advocacy Program

Management Survey

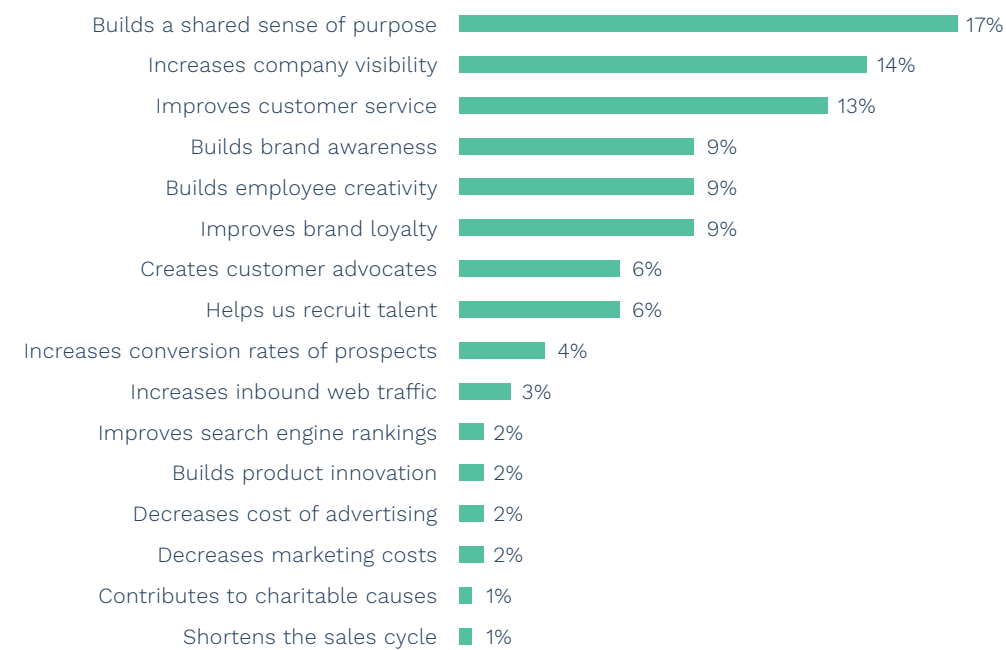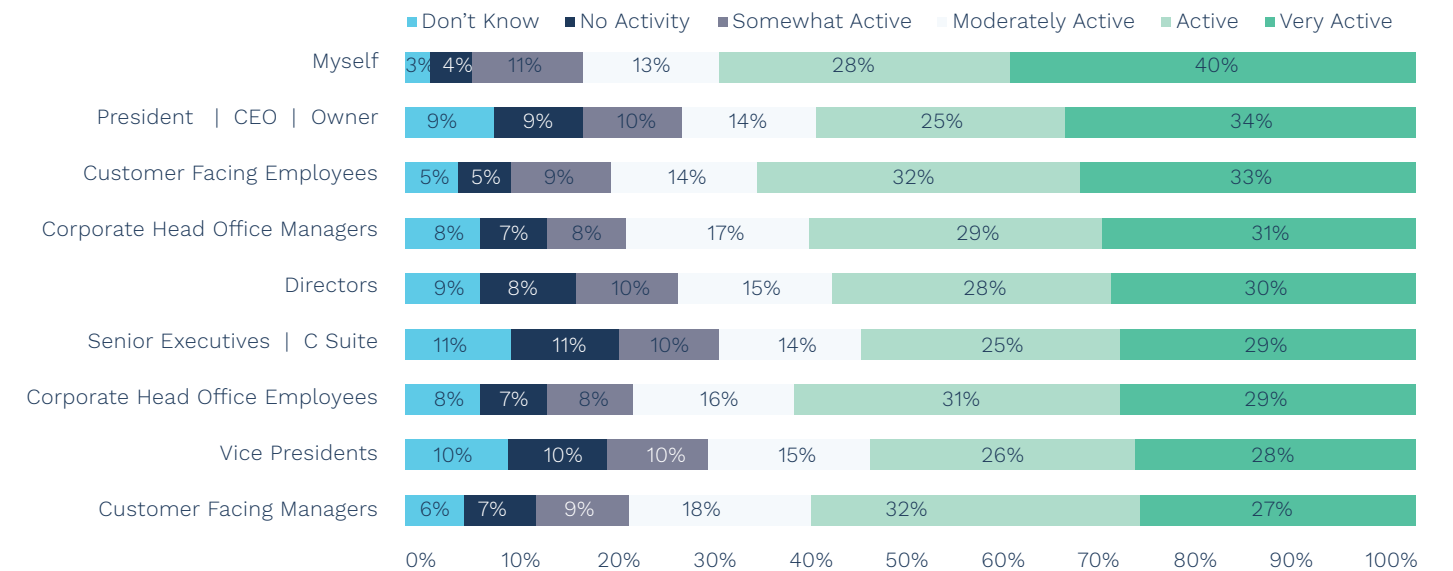| Benefit	%
Builds a shared sense of purpose	17%
Increases company visibility	14%
Improves customer service	13%
Builds brand awareness	9%
Builds employee creativity	9%
Improves brand loyalty	9%
Creates customer advocates	6%
Helps us recruit talent	6%
Increases conversion rates of prospects	4%
Increases inbound web traffic	3%
Improves search engine rankings	2%
Builds product innovation	2%
Decreases cost of advertising	2%
Decreases marketing costs	2%
Contributes to charitable causes	1%
Shortens the sales cycle	1%

Activity of Employees on Workplace Social Media

Employee Survey

Legend: Don't Know · No Activity · Somewhat Active · Moderately Active · Active · Very Active

	Don't Know	No Activity	Somewhat Active	Moderately Active	Active	Very Active
Myself	3%	4%	11%	13%	28%	40%
President | CEO | Owner	9%	9%	10%	14%	25%	34%
Customer Facing Employees	5%	5%	9%	14%	32%	33%
Corporate Head Office Managers	8%	7%	8%	17%	29%	31%
Directors	9%	8%	10%	15%	28%	30%
Senior Executives | C Suite	11%	11%	10%	14%	25%	29%
Corporate Head Office Employees	8%	7%	8%	16%	31%	29%
Vice Presidents	10%	10%	10%	15%	26%	28%
Customer Facing Managers	6%	7%	9%	18%	32%	27%

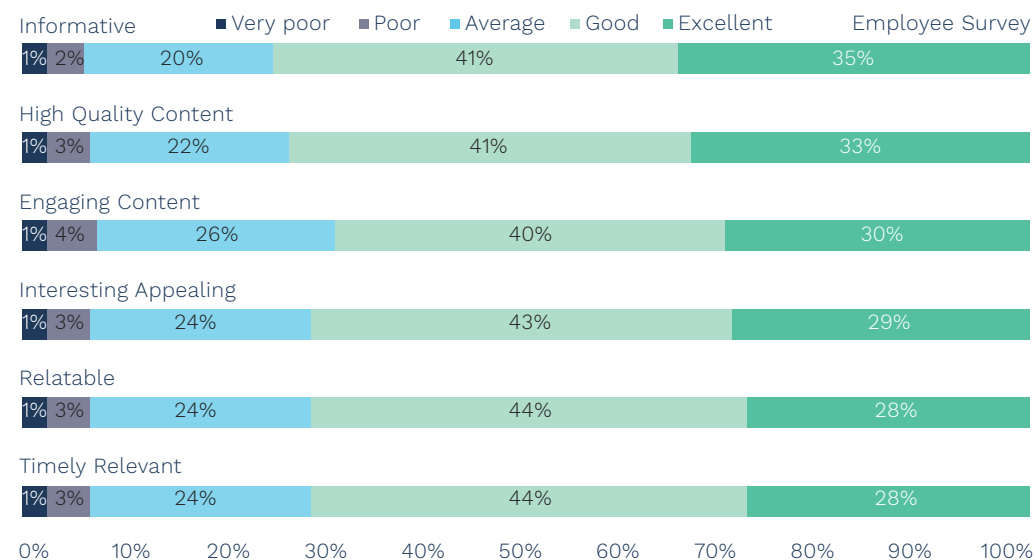0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Leaders who embrace this opportunity achieve several benefits that provide them with a way to come out ahead and stake a competitive advantage.[4] Spreading brand messages through employees on social media provides innovative ways to reach a wider audience of stakeholders. On average, employees have 10 times more contacts than the official branded channels. Company branded messages reach 561% further when shared by employees versus branded channels.[5] Most importantly, research indicates that 84% of consumers trust recommendations from people they know compared to 15% who believe company messages.[6] Similarly, 70% of adults online reported trusting recommendations from friends and family, but only 15% trusted companies' social media posts.[7]

Top leadership (Presidents/CEOs/Owners) are the most likely to report elevated levels of personal brand promotion through social media channels. Their participation is a critical first step. Employees look to their leaders to define the brand mission that everyone rallies behind. Company leaders can also model how employees should interact with social media. Support from leadership is a critical component. When top administration is enthusiastically leading the charge, employees are more likely to participate.
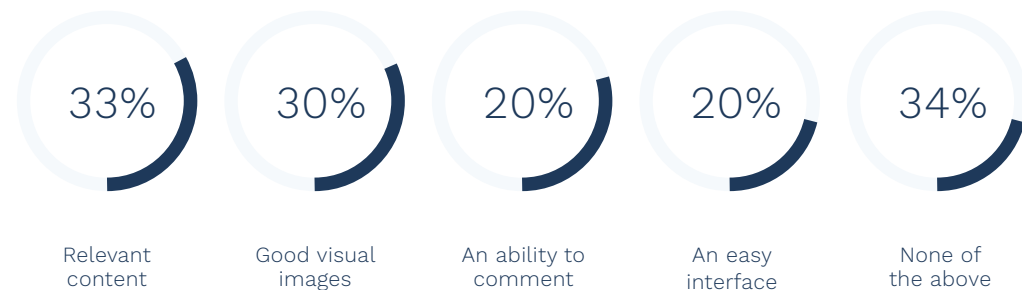
According to our findings, employees overwhelmingly approve of their company's social media posts, with the majority finding them informative, engaging, interesting, relatable, timely and of high quality. This evidence strongly supports the notion that with encouragement, employees would be willing to increase engagement of these posts by sharing or commenting. It highlights that many employers are missing an opportunity to maximize the impact of their social posts in the market.

Employee Ratings of their Company's Social Media Posts

Informative   ■ Very poor ■ Poor ■ Average ■ Good ■ Excellent   Employee Survey

Category	Very poor	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
Informative	1%	2%	20%	41%	35%
High Quality Content	1%	3%	22%	41%	33%
Engaging Content	1%	4%	26%	40%	30%
Interesting Appealing	1%	3%	24%	43%	29%
Relatable	1%	3%	24%	44%	28%
Timely Relevant	1%	3%	24%	44%	28%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Employees answers when they were asked what would encourage them to share?

Employee Survey - Multi-pick

33%	30%	20%	20%	34%
Relevant content	Good visual images	An ability to comment	An easy interface	None of the above

What would encourage employees to share more is simple; relevant content.

Making your brand pop amidst the noise of 24-hour media cycle is a challenge. The solution is not just an agency driven viral ad that quickly fizzles out, but rather, a steady stream of excellent content supported by diverse employee resources.

What are employees saying when they engage in social media about their workplaces? Simple: they make positive comments about their employers to friends and family, encourage others to buy company goods and services, and recommend their companies as great places to work.
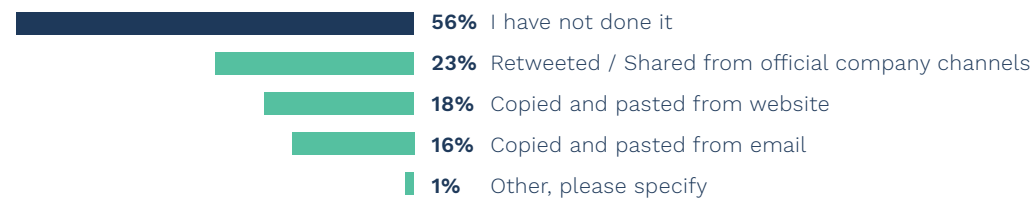
How Employees Participate

Employee Survey - Multi-pick

| Participation	%
I have not participated	41%
Made positive comments about employer to friends or family	23%
Made positive comment about employer where others could see or read them	22%
Encouraged others to buy company products or services	18%
Recommended employer to others as a place to work	18%
Communicated major changes in our company	14%
Been recommend by my colleagues	11%
Provided leadership with input on open forums	10%
Voted employer in a poll or contest	10%
Defended employer to family of friends	8%
Defended employer where others could see or read it	7%
Other, please specify	2%

Employees who share company news on their social media feeds are most likely to share or retweet posts from official company channels. In a world of hashtags and alerts, this is the most straightforward method for organizations looking to generate social media buzz. Even *without* making it easy to do, over a third of employees report going to the trouble of copying and pasting information from emails or websites.

How have you shared company content?

56% I have not done it
23% Retweeted / Shared from official company channels
18% Copied and pasted from website
16% Copied and pasted from email
**1%** Other, please specify

This statistic is somewhat remarkable since less than half of employees (43%) believe they are permitted to share their company's content while adding their own commentary.

Are you allowed to share company content and add your own commentary?

Yes 43%
Don't Know 25%
No 32%
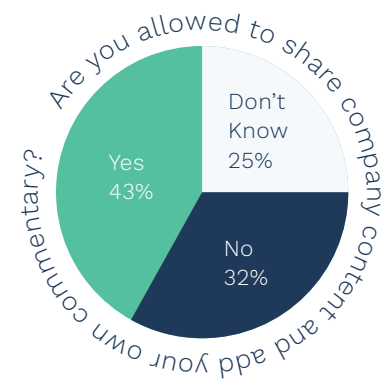
Which social media sites are the most encouraged for employee advocacy? Facebook is the reigning champion of social networks that companies encourage employees to use for business, followed by LinkedIn and Twitter.

Social media sites companies encourage
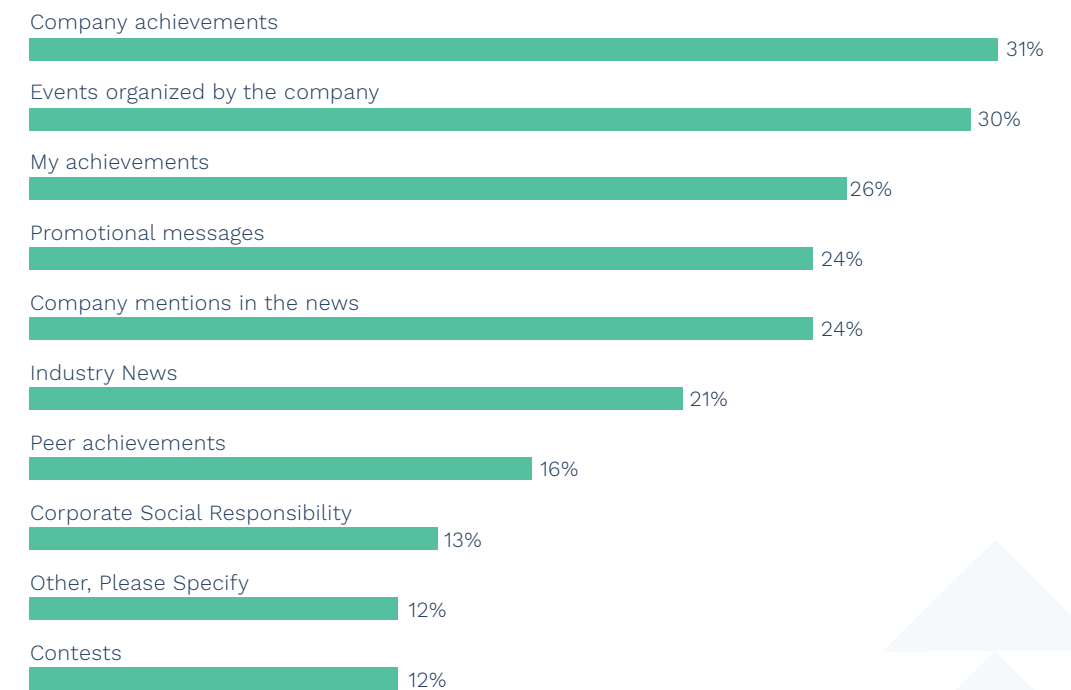
9% 11% 18% 26% 28% 36% 62%
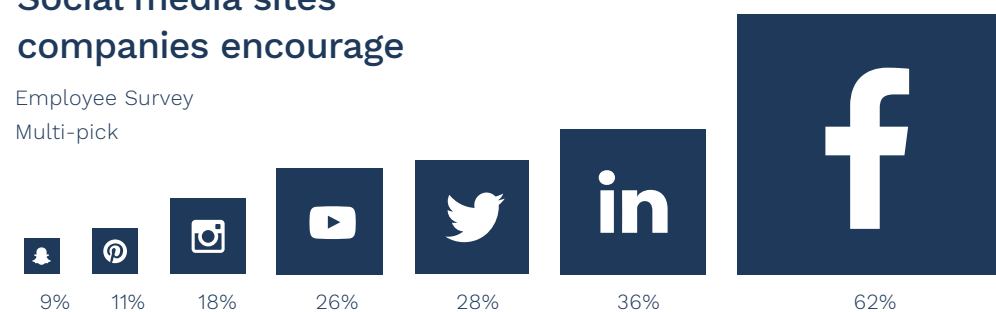
"It's not about me. It's about the mission I'm on with others that matters!"

Irrespective of what social site an employee uses, for employees: "It's not about me as an individual - it's about the mission I'm on with others that matters!" This theme re-emerges when we look at what content employees share. Company achievements are number one followed by company organized events.

What gets shared

Company achievements — 31%
Events organized by the company — 30%
My achievements — 26%
Promotional messages — 24%
Company mentions in the news — 24%
Industry News — 21%
Peer achievements — 16%
Corporate Social Responsibility — 13%
Other, Please Specify — 12%
Contests — 12%

Brand mission is critical to tribal leadership. Employee advocacy is not about cheesy contests. Employees gain strength through association. Bragging rights are about who someone works for and the mission they are on. **Employees are more likely to share company achievements than personal achievements.** Expanding one's professional network is the number one benefit to employees; standing out amongst one's peers, the least important.

Benefits You Perceive as An Employee Posting About Your Company

Employee Survey

Category	%
Stand out among my peers	7%
Recognition as a thought leader	7%
Recognition for my contribution	9%
Develop skills in high demand	9%
Build my professional partnerships	12%
Create opportunities for referrals	13%
Attract and develop new business	14%
Keep up with industry trends	15%
Expand my professional network	15%

Social media is not just about bragging rights for the company. In fact, employees use social media at work for pragmatic productivity reasons. One of the most popular uses is a problem-solving tool to find the latest information and ideas, allowing workers to explore novel approaches to the challenges they face.
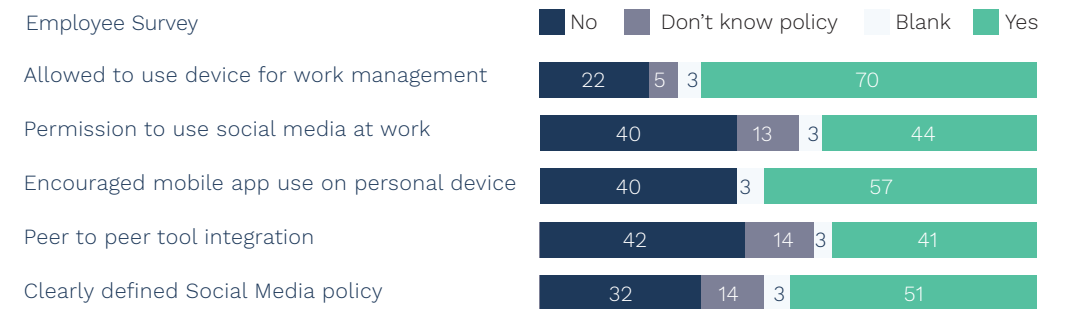
How Social Media helps Creativity of Employees

Employee Survey

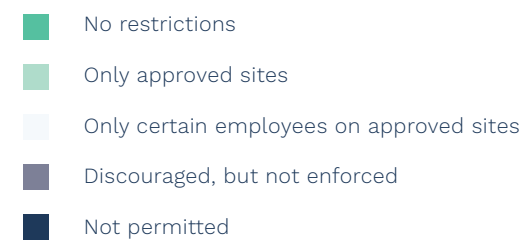| 13%	18%	18%	19%	32%
Finding new uses for existing methods or equipment	Exploring new approaches irrespective of their difficulty	Trying new approaches in my work even if they are unproven or risky	Helping me be persistent in the information searching process	Finding new information and ideas

Resistance to Change

Against this backdrop of opportunity rests a remarkable resistance to change among many enterprises. Currently, many organizations block employee access to social media and adopt restrictive social media policies.[8] [9]

Social Media Management in the Workplace

Employee Survey

Legend: No · Don't know policy · Blank · Yes

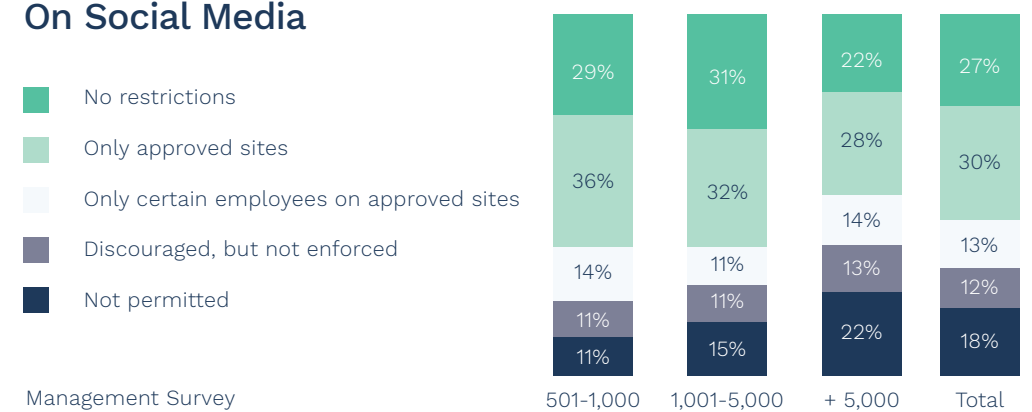|	No	Don't know policy	Blank	Yes
Allowed to use device for work management	22	5	3	70
Permission to use social media at work	40	13	3	44
Encouraged mobile app use on personal device	40		3	57
Peer to peer tool integration	42	14	3	41
Clearly defined Social Media policy	32	14	3	51

Large companies are much more likely to either discourage or not permit their employees to be on social media. Our findings align with these trends: while 70% of employees can use their mobile device at work, only 57% are encouraged to apply mobile work apps on their devices. Large companies (over 5,000 employees) are less likely (67%) to allow their employees to bring their device (e.g., smartphone) to work (67% versus an average of 77% for companies in the 501- to 5,000 employee range).

Company's Policies On Social Media

Legend:
- No restrictions
- Only approved sites
- Only certain employees on approved sites
- Discouraged, but not enforced
- Not permitted

Company Size (employees)

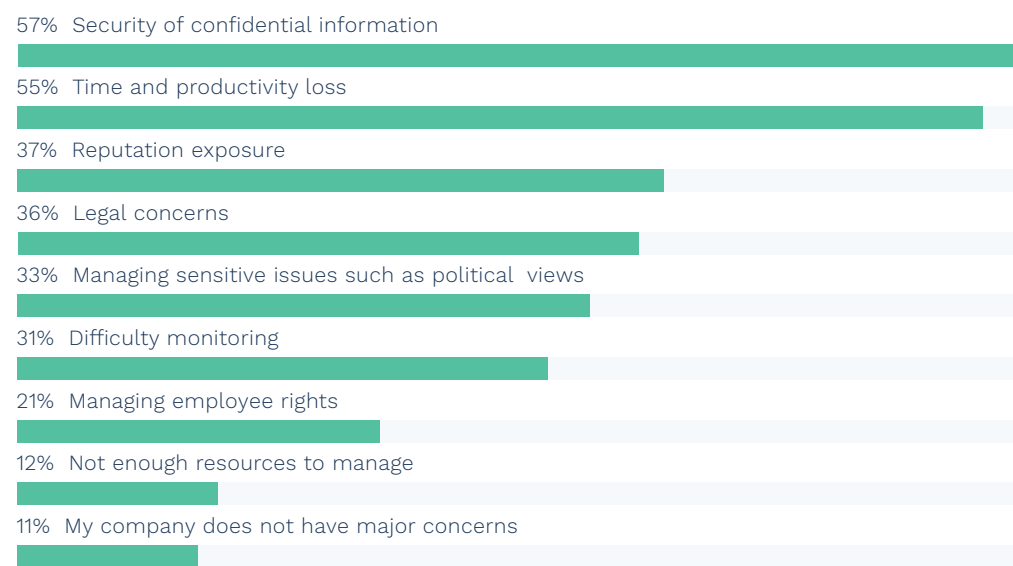| Policy	501-1,000	1,001-5,000	+ 5,000	Total
No restrictions	29%	31%	22%	27%
Only approved sites	36%	32%	28%	30%
Only certain employees on approved sites	14%	11%	14%	13%
Discouraged, but not enforced	11%	11%	13%	12%
Not permitted	11%	15%	22%	18%

Management Survey

As with any resistance to change, fairness dictates a sober view of why many employers are reluctant to have employees embrace social media. There are associated vulnerabilities that enterprises must address. Most notably, for many companies, social media expands "the spectrum of reputation risk and boosts risk dynamics."[10]

Employers are understandably concerned about the risks associated with social networks. They suspect workers focused on their next social status update will be less productive. They worry that a single picture taken out of context could damage their reputation, and they fear information leakage and compromised security.[11] [12] [13] In worst-case scenarios, employees can act against their company as brand "saboteurs."[14] Our findings reflect these concerns throughout North America.

According to management, the top three concerns companies have regarding social media use are the security of confidential information, time and productivity loss, and reputation exposure.

Major Concerns Company Has Regarding Social Media Use

Management Survey - Multi-pick

57% Security of confidential information

55% Time and productivity loss

37% Reputation exposure

36% Legal concerns

33% Managing sensitive issues such as political views

31% Difficulty monitoring

21% Managing employee rights

12% Not enough resources to manage

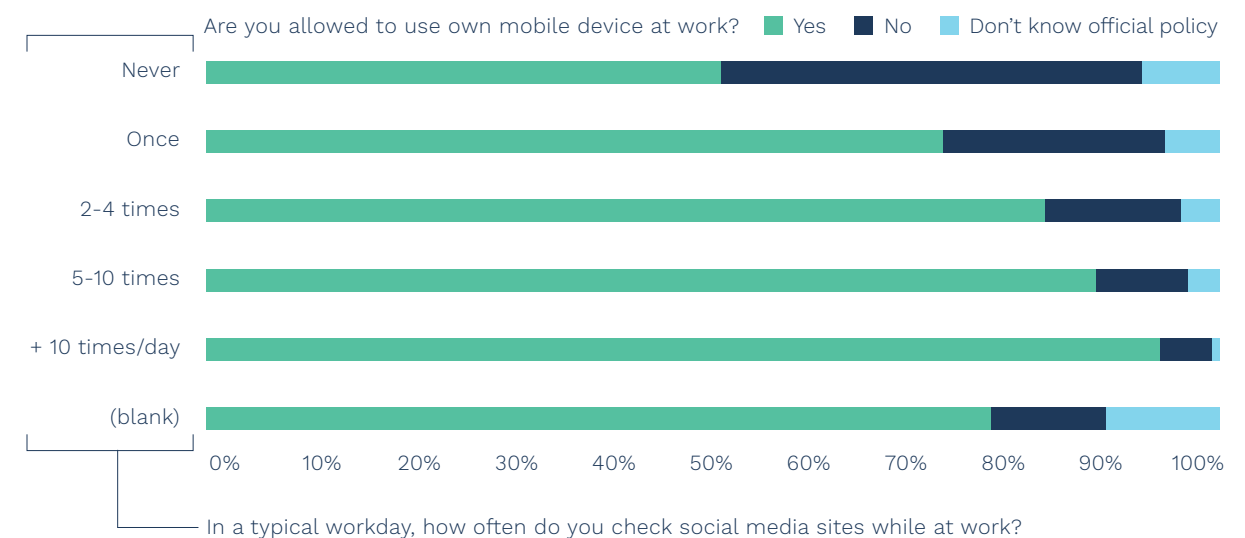11% My company does not have major concerns

Whether socially sanctioned in the workplace or not, platforms for social networking are increasingly promoting the real-time sharing of thoughts and experiences, further blurring the work versus personal divide. For digital natives, social media is a way of life, the way they interact and engage with the world. But even older generations have gone digital; Facebook has now become a social space for the middle-aged, as younger generations have moved on to new pastures (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat, etc.)

On average, we spend almost three hours per day on social platforms.[15] Our findings indicate that *nearly half* of this use occurs in the workplace, with employees reporting they spend on average 1 hour and 22 minutes a day on social media. If companies either require or allow their employees to use their own mobile devices at work, then many are checking it over ten times a day.

Checking Social Media at Work

Employee Survey

Are you allowed to use own mobile device at work?   ▇ Yes   ▇ No   ▇ Don't know official policy

Never	
Once	
2-4 times	
5-10 times	
+ 10 times/day	
(blank)	

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

In a typical workday, how often do you check social media sites while at work?

As employees continue to renegotiate a balance between their private life and work responsibilities through their digital personas, so too will employers need to adopt policies that balance the boundaries of their employees' online work and personal activities.

The Case for Tribal Engagement

Engaged employees do more than spend their time at work.

Prompted by passion, as well as a profound sense of connection to their company, they invest their "self" in their work. It is an investment with dividends for companies. **Engaged employees drive innovation, increase productivity and enhance customer satisfaction.**[16] Overall, this impact is exponential: organizations with high employee engagement outperform those with unengaged employees by 202%.[17]

Productivity gains and reduced attrition are the most commonly cited benefits of engaged employees. Despite these apparent advantages, many organizations struggle with the operationalization of engagement strategies. Even those who manage to design the conditions in which engagement flourishes face the additional challenge of strategically harnessing the power of engaged employees to advance business priorities. The answer to this problem is clear: engaged employees are excellent ambassadors for their companies, and one way to harness their power is through employee advocacy. Engaged employees with digital connections are ideal Employee Advocates.
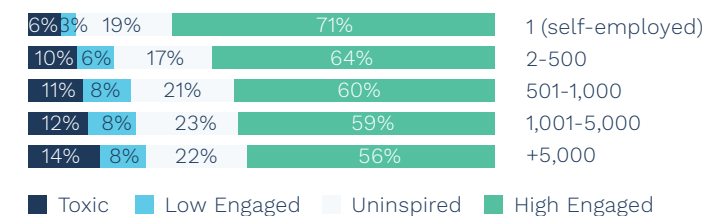
The State of Employee Engagement

Employees have an overall positive view of their employers, with almost two-thirds of the workforce rating their experience as *Very Good* or *Excellent*; indicating that they make a *Positive* or *Very Positive* recommendation of their employer, and stating that they are *Likely* or *Very Likely* to continue working for their employer. However, this proportion decreases as organization size increases, suggesting that maintaining engagement in a large organization comes with a unique set of challenges.

Employee Engagement Compared with Enterprise Size

Employee Survey

Toxic	Low Engaged	Uninspired	High Engaged	
6%	3%	19%	71%	1 (self-employed)
10%	6%	17%	64%	2-500
11%	8%	21%	60%	501-1,000
12%	8%	23%	59%	1,001-5,000
14%	8%	22%	56%	+5,000

■ Toxic   ■ Low Engaged   □ Uninspired   ■ High Engaged

Canadian employees are less likely to rate their experience as *Excellent* (22%) than their American counterparts (31%). The latter finding is consistent with Gallup's 2016 State of the Workplace report which found that some 33% of U.S. employees report high engagement.[18]

Companies also need to be cognizant of threats to their reputations from disenfranchised workers, although the size of this risk is small versus the size of the opportunity to amplify positive voices. Across workplaces in Canada and the United States, 5% of employees report a *Very Negative* or *Negative* overall experience when asked about their company as a place to work. Half of these expect to leave their business within the next six months.
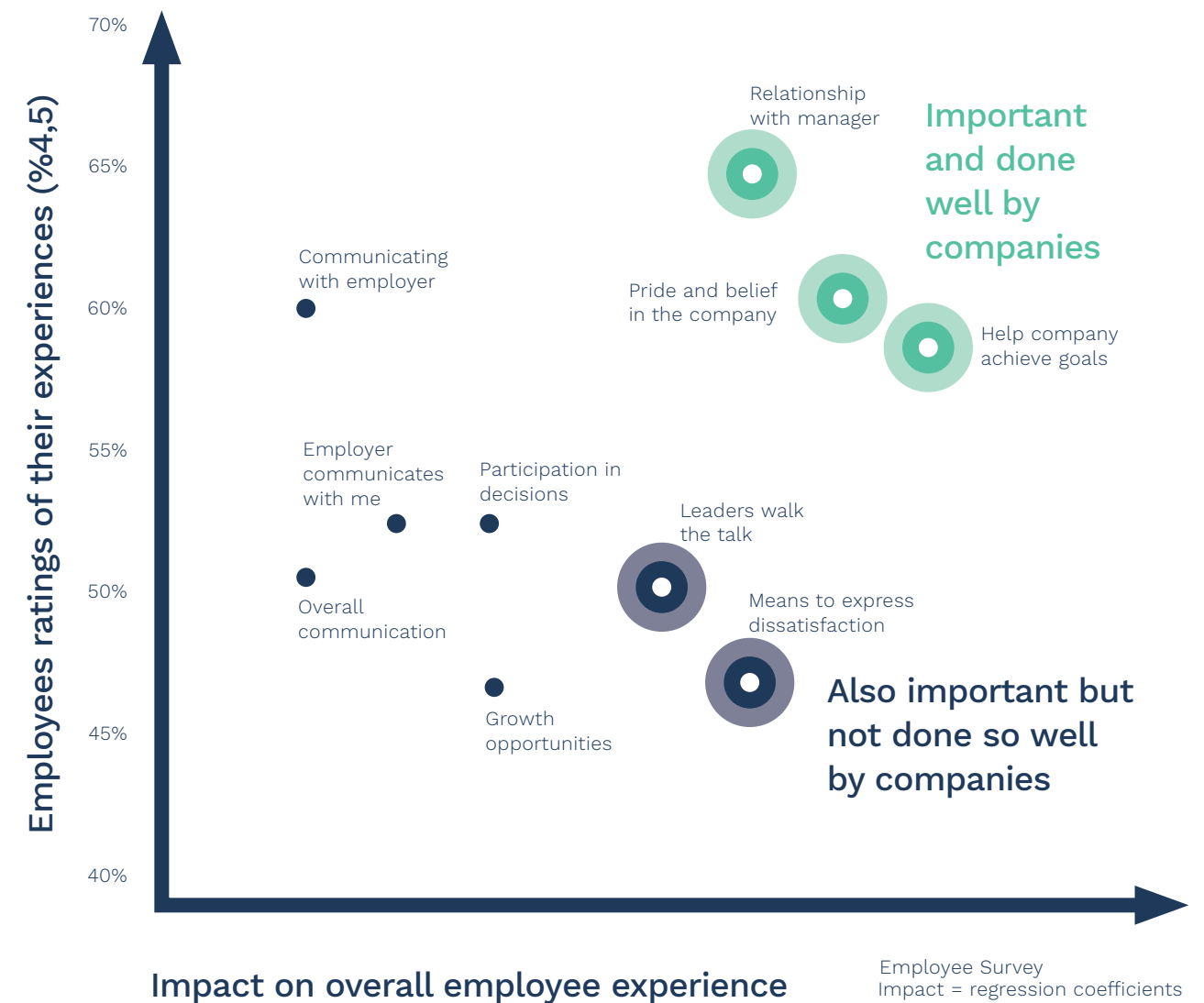
What Drives Engagement

"Employee engagement" is a nebulous term. With varying definitions by academics and business practitioners alike, it is difficult to operationalize and measure. Furthermore, like social media usage, it does not lend itself well to a command and control process.

Nonetheless, there is a good deal of evidence on how to drive employee engagement. Engaged employees do not exist in the absence of elevated levels of trust and pride;[19] a finding corroborated with the current research.

Pride refers to employee perceptions of the organization they work for, as well as of the work they do. For employees, both factors were significant drivers of an overall positive employee experience at the organizational level (pride and belief in the company) and the individual level (feeling that their efforts help the company to achieve its goals). Overall, employees reported that organizations are doing a respectable job at fostering this pride.

Engaged employees trust their superiors and their organization.[20] Our findings are consistent with Gallup's ongoing research on the topic that an employees' relationship with their immediate manager has a very high impact on overall employee experience. However, a positive relationship with a direct supervisor is only one element of trust.


Employees ratings of their experiences (%4,5) (vertical axis, 40%–70%)

- Relationship with manager
- **Important and done well by companies**
- Communicating with employer
- Pride and belief in the company
- Help company achieve goals
- Employer communicates with me
- Participation in decisions
- Leaders walk the talk
- Overall communication
- Means to express dissatisfaction
- **Also important but not done so well by companies**
- Growth opportunities

Impact on overall employee experience

Employee Survey
Impact = regression coefficients

Our research also identified aspects of trust that almost half of organizations are not providing, including a belief that leaders "walk the talk." Other studies have identified similar deficiencies: only 46% of employees have 'a great deal of trust' in their employers[21] and just 43% believe they have an organizational culture of trust and empowerment that supports employee engagement.[22]

Advocacy as the Next Step in Engagement

We define Employee Advocates as workers who not only have a positive overall experience at work, but those who are also unequivocally positive in the recommendations of their company. Using this criterion of individuals who rated their work experience as *Very Good* or *Excellent* and stated that they would be *Very Positive* in their recommendations of their company, 30% of employees are identifiable as Employee Advocates (25% in Canada compared to 35% in the United States).

To further our tribal thesis, the relationship between ratings of "Pride and Belief in the Values of an Organization" and "Employee Advocates" are quite telling. Employees who rate their pride and belief as a "5 – Excellent" are *50% more likely* to be advocates than if they rate them as "Very Good."

Relationship between Pride & Beliefs in Values of Organization and Employee Advocacy

Employee Survey

% Advocates

2%	2%	8%	22%	73%
Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent

My pride and belief in the values of our organization
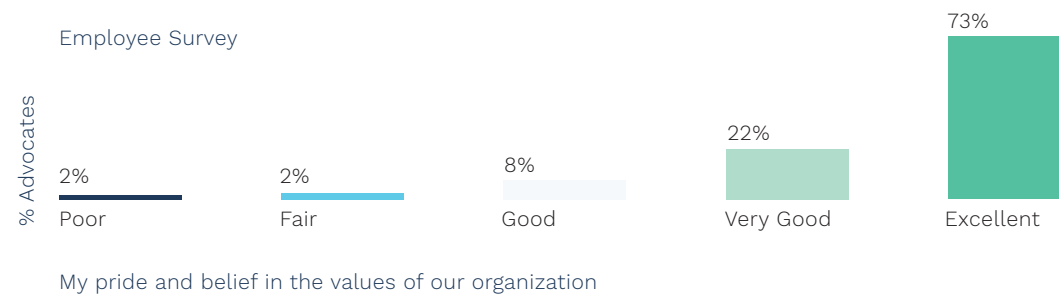
Overall, 30% of employees claim they would be Very Positive in recommending their employer. This percentage jumps dramatically to over 70% among those who rate their experience of pride and belief in the values of their organization as "Excellent."

Work-life integration through and across social media is already unusually high with engaged employees. Among employees who follow their company on social channels, 75% rate their *pride and belief in the values of their organization* as *Very Good* or *Excellent*. Among those who do not follow their company on social channels, this percentage drops to 47%. Similarly, 71% rate their experience of being able to *help achieve the value of their organization* as *Very Good* or *Excellent*; among non-followers, this drops to 48%. **Social media is thus the primary medium for employee advocacy.** Yet only 41% of employees are encouraged to share their company's social postings on their social networks.

How Most Companies Internally Communicate Versus What the Best Do

Just as technology has changed the relationship between company and consumer, it is also affecting the employer-employee relationship. Internal communication and employee engagement closely align with Employee Advocacy. The importance of communication with employees should not be underestimated.

Many employers are using internal social media networks to enhance communication and employee engagement by reducing the gap between leaders and employees, getting employee feedback, and providing a workplace community. However, despite the benefits of building internal social networks, most employees rate their companies as doing only a "so-so" job at workplace communications. Just over half rate digital technology adoption for internal communications as Very Good or Excellent.
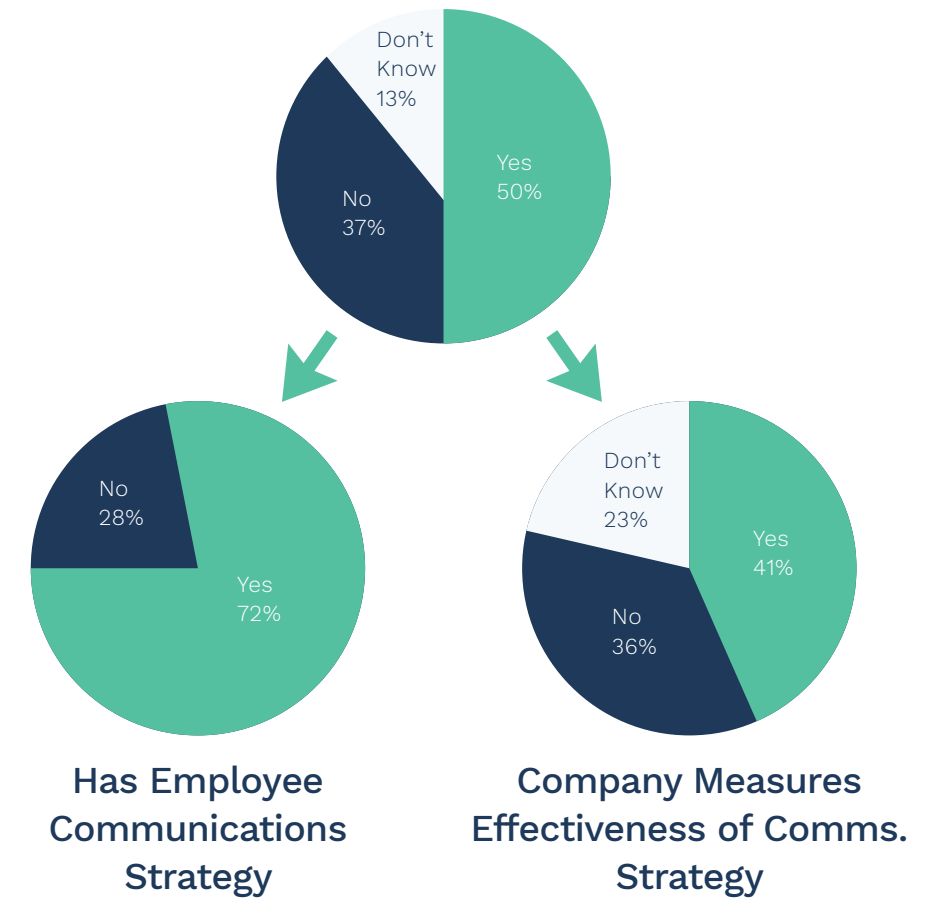
Indeed, according to Management, only half of companies have a digital strategy that includes peer-to-peer communication tools, such as intranets or Enterprise Social Networks.

Management reports that over a quarter of companies do not have an employee communications strategy and less than half measure the effectiveness of their communications strategy.
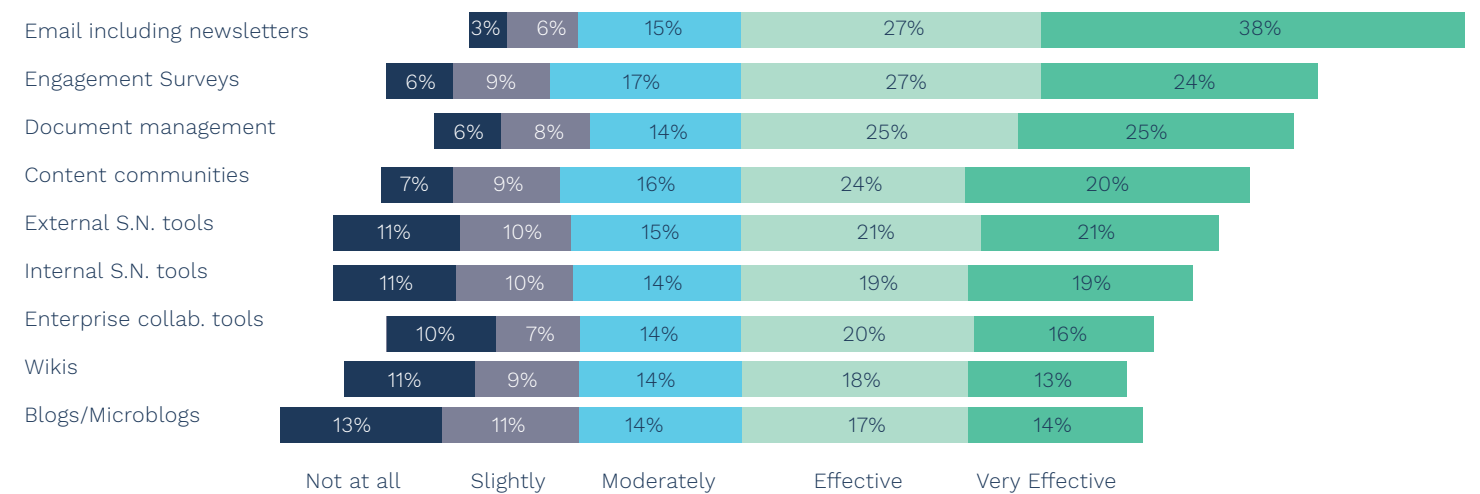
One of the reasons for this mediocrity is that email retains the highest ranking of what companies do best. Content Communities rank much lower (just 44% doing it well) as do external social network tools (at 42%).

Employees Ratings of Digital Technology Adoption for Internal Communications

Employee Survey

■ Very poor ■ Poor ■ Good ■ Very Good ■ Excellent

4%	10%	31%	34%	20%

Company's Digital Strategy Includes Integration of Peer-to-Peer Comm. Tools

Don't Know 13%
No 37%
Yes 50%

Has Employee Communications Strategy

No 28%
Yes 72%

Company Measures Effectiveness of Comms. Strategy

Don't Know 23%
No 36%
Yes 41%

Employees ratings of communication effectiveness

Note: charts don't include "Don't know" and "NA"

	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Effective	Very Effective
Email including newsletters	3%	6%	15%	27%	38%
Engagement Surveys	6%	9%	17%	27%	24%
Document management	6%	8%	14%	25%	25%
Content communities	7%	9%	16%	24%	20%
External S.N. tools	11%	10%	15%	21%	21%
Internal S.N. tools	11%	10%	14%	19%	19%
Enterprise collab. tools	10%	7%	14%	20%	16%
Wikis	11%	9%	14%	18%	13%
Blogs/Microblogs	13%	11%	14%	17%	14%

Engagement Levels by Communication Effectiveness

Employee Survey

Highly Engaged	Low Engaged
61%	39%
20%	26%
19%	35%

■ Very Effective = average of 4 or higher across all workplace communications

■ Moderately Effective = everyone else

■ Very Ineffective = average of 2 or lower across all workplace communications
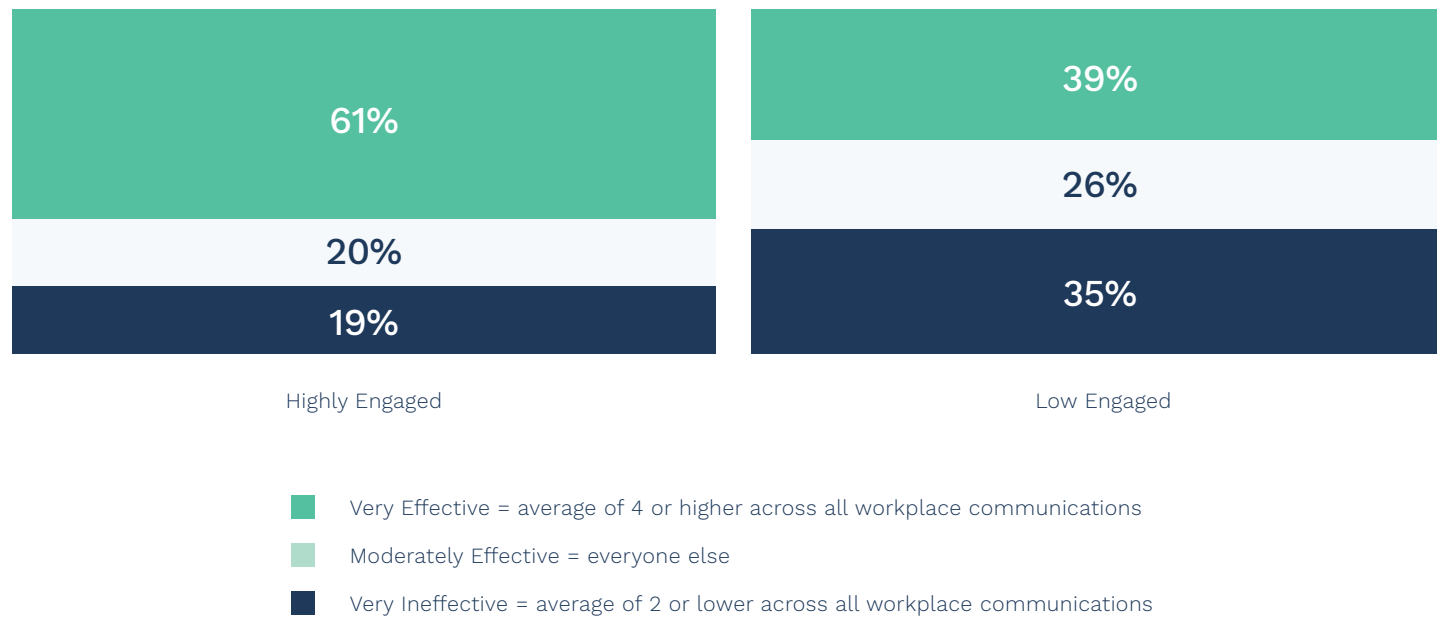
When we look across workplace communication practices, the difference effective versus ineffective in employee engagement is dramatic. Almost two-thirds (61%) of highly engaged employees rate their company's communications practices as useful across all communication practices versus only 39% of low engaged employees. Conversely, companies viewed as consistently poor at communication practices have just 19% highly engaged employees.

High-quality internal communication not only fosters strong employee-organization relationships, but it also promotes a positive brand message. Employees who identify with their employer are more likely to align individual-level choices with broader organizational objectives, be loyal to the organization, and speak positively about the

group.[23] Internal communications, like all other vital functions, need to be well thought through as proactive and strategic endeavors.

The way you encourage employees to communicate - both internally and externally - has an enormous impact on your ability to buy in to the company mission. Effective communication is always in the employer's best interest. A study from Opinion Research Corporation suggests that employees are two times more likely to go the extra mile for the organization and almost four times more likely to recommend their company when satisfied with how their business communicates tough decisions. Positive perceptions around company communications boost employee motivation, and ultimately, fosters employee advocacy.
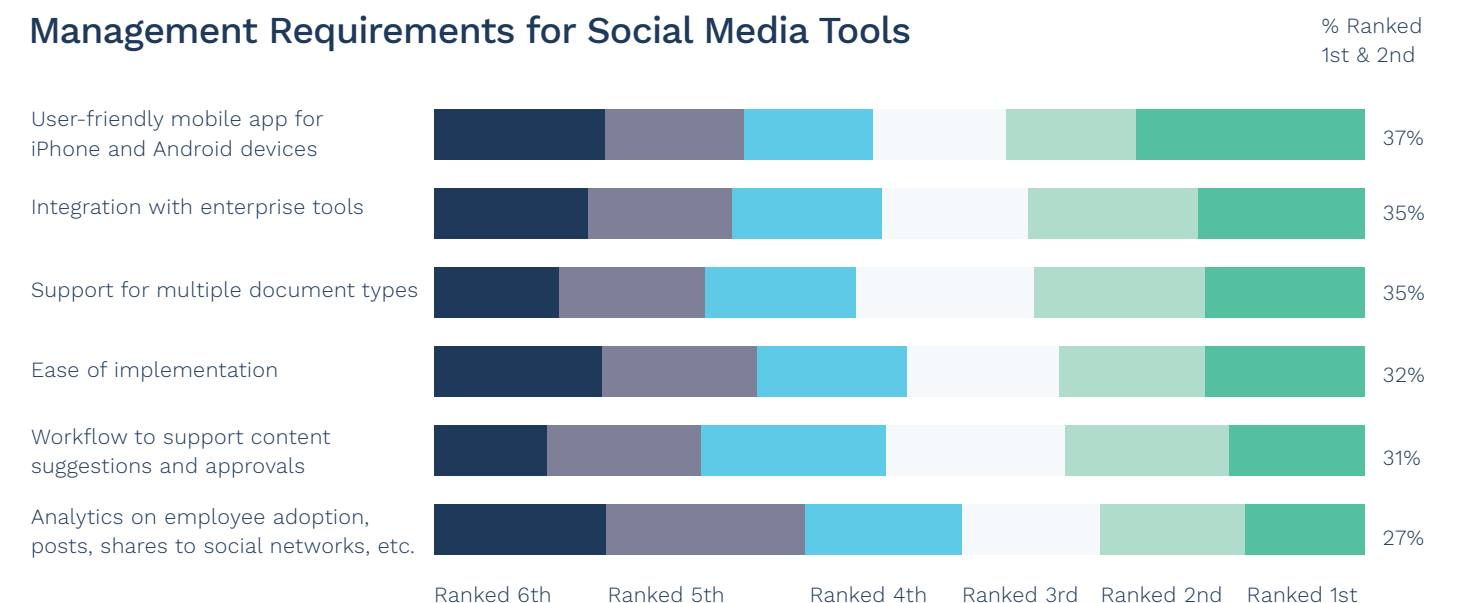
Guidelines for the New Frontier

Make Social Media Advocacy Easy, Accessible and Compelling

Making social sharing easy requires the latest social technology management. Efficient corporate social advocacy applications have several requirements: they must be mobile user-friendly, integrate with enterprise tools, support multiple document types, have intelligently designed workflows for content suggestions and approvals, all while providing analytics on their effectiveness. Employees need to be able to share company content and add their commentary easily. Again, less than half of employees are currently doing so.

It is also essential to ensure that there is a steady stream of new and interesting content available. Software platforms make it easy for employees to share this content through the social media channel of their choice, regardless of the individual's social savviness. Providing numerous options for sharing increases accessibility. The number of mechanisms available to employees positively correlates with the number of expressions of employee voice.[24]

Management Requirements for Social Media Tools

% Ranked 1st & 2nd

User-friendly mobile app for iPhone and Android devices	37%
Integration with enterprise tools	35%
Support for multiple document types	35%
Ease of implementation	32%
Workflow to support content suggestions and approvals	31%
Analytics on employee adoption, posts, shares to social networks, etc.	27%

Ranked 6th   Ranked 5th   Ranked 4th   Ranked 3rd   Ranked 2nd   Ranked 1st

Have a Pressure Valve

The very best employee advocacy, social media, and internal communications programs amplify positive messages in the public domain while managing negative messages internally. This ability to funnel employee concerns to an appropriate (offline) and responsive mechanism is why having an effective internal communications system is critical. Employees need outlets for negative messages and personal grievances. If these venues do not exist, or are ineffective within the organization, social media provides an easily accessible public forums for employees to work through these issues. Internal mechanisms for listening and responding to employees must be in place and must be effective.

Be Patient, Understand the Process

On average, approximately **30% of employees have immediate potential for acting as Employee Advocates** due to their high engagement and indication that they would provide a very positive recommendation for their employer. However, even among these employees, it is essential to understand their differences and to know who are your watchers, sharers, commenters, producers, and curators.[25]

Do not rush the setup of a program. Start with a small group or department and track their performance. It will help determine the needs of other employees and for planning a company-wide implementation. The first team of employees from the pilot launch can then help the beginners and act as mentors.

Initially, with the introduction of an employee advocacy program, the majority are likely to be watcher. This circumstance does not indicate disinterest, however. At the opposite end of the spectrum are creators, representing the highest level of engagement. These employees, whether by nature or by job

design are likely to "spend countless hours as community and discussion board moderators or wiki editors, not only helping make sure that the content is well organized for the site's users, but also making sure that people are participating well in the community."[26] In this way, the goal of maximizing the value of internal voice mechanisms by progressively moving employees through the various levels of engagement occurs.

Guide, Not Command

Establishing policies, guidelines and practices for social media and employee advocacy is important, not only for employers to manage risk, but also to enhance trust among employees. Guidelines commonly outline approaches to content creation, content sourcing, and content sharing. Posting work content on personal social media can be intimidating to some employees, and organizations will need to instill confidence first.

While top-down strategies driven by management tend to be more common than strategies where employees have more autonomy it is important to keep in mind that too much control can make messaging seem inauthentic. Having a 'single voice' online may seem less credible by the company's stakeholder groups, especially to prospective new customers.
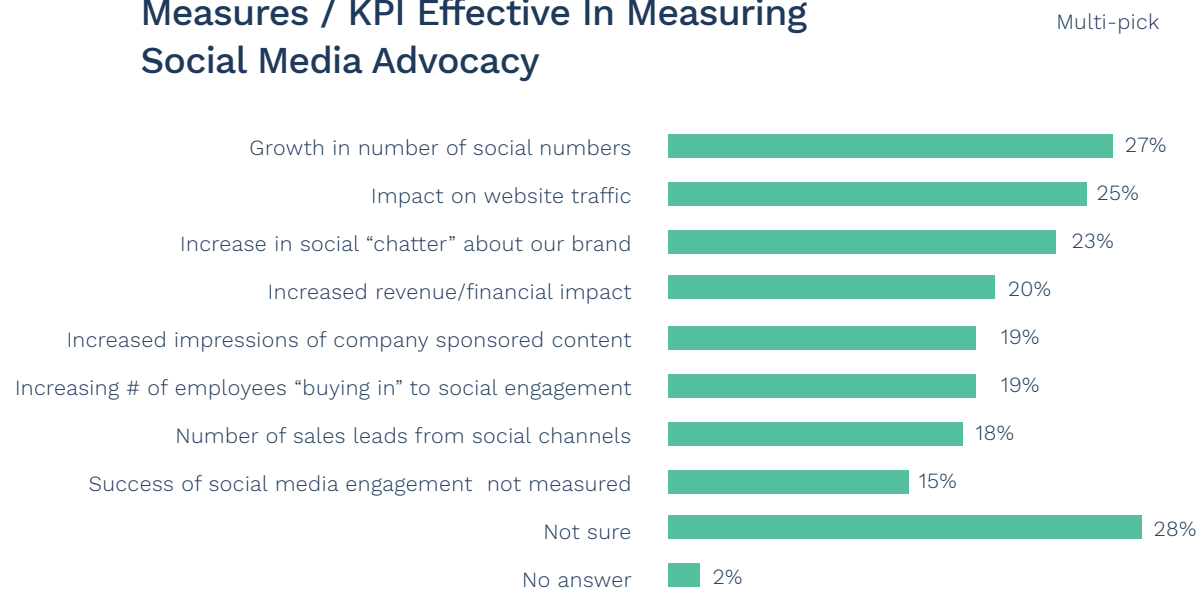
Organizations that instill employees with company values and brand messaging through good communications can ultimately trust and allow them to add a personal touch to their employee advocacy.

Training and employee partnerships are another way to increase both employee engagement and employee advocacy. Dell, for instance "has trained 10,000 employees to use social media to augment their jobs."[27] Nationwide used reverse mentoring to train senior executives on the benefits and use of social media and other internal communications.[28]

Measure and Evaluate

As with other business-critical functions, social media deserves efficient measurement and objective evaluation. According to management, most companies do not measure the effectiveness of their social media advocacy as a Key Performance Indicator. Indeed, over a quarter of them (28%) are unaware of any measurement. Of those pursuing KPIs, growth in the number of social followers is the most frequent measure.

Measures / KPI Effective In Measuring Social Media Advocacy

Multi-pick

Measure	%
Growth in number of social numbers	27%
Impact on website traffic	25%
Increase in social "chatter" about our brand	23%
Increased revenue/financial impact	20%
Increased impressions of company sponsored content	19%
Increasing # of employees "buying in" to social engagement	19%
Number of sales leads from social channels	18%
Success of social media engagement not measured	15%
Not sure	28%
No answer	2%

We Are as Strong as Our Tribe

Great leaders understand that their job is to create the conditions for performance to improve versus a much narrower view of simply managing performance. Creating the right organizational context for success to flourish is critical. Nowhere is this more evident than in "managing" the new digital world of social media. Rather than being lonely or threatened by what social media is capable of doing, great leaders are seizing the strengths they have in numbers to directly reach their audiences in a matter more authentic than ever before.
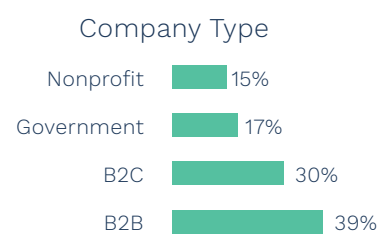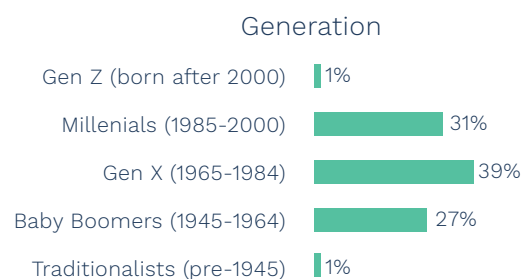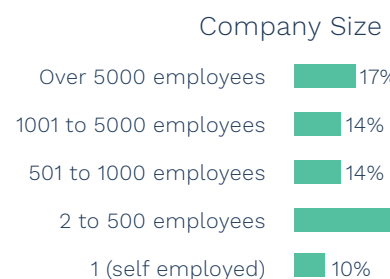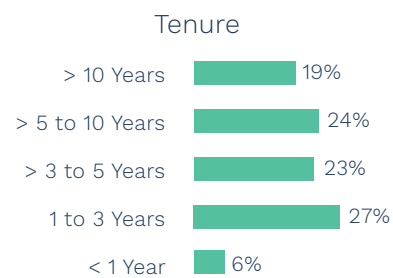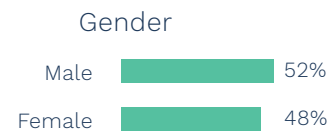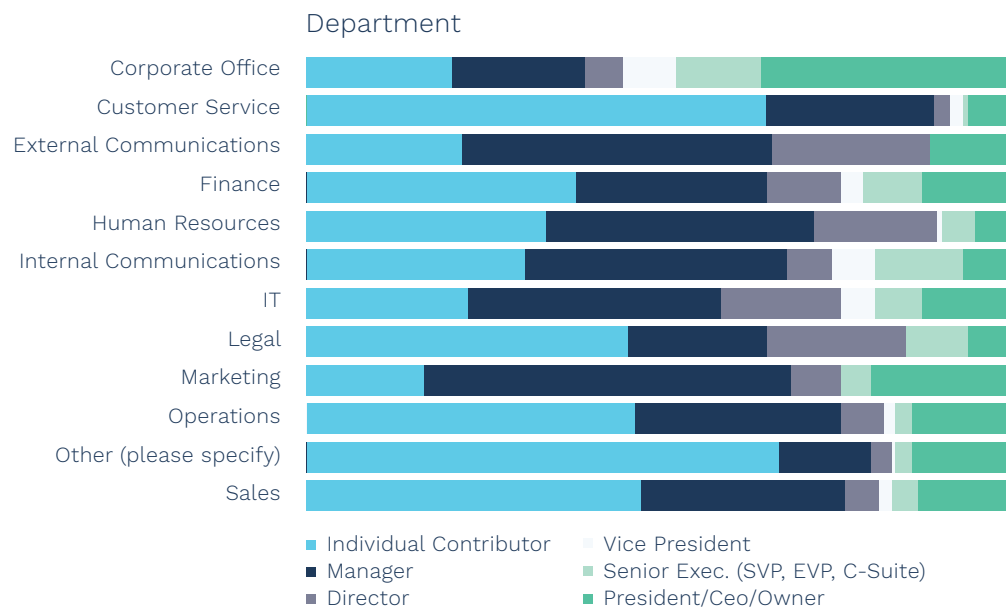
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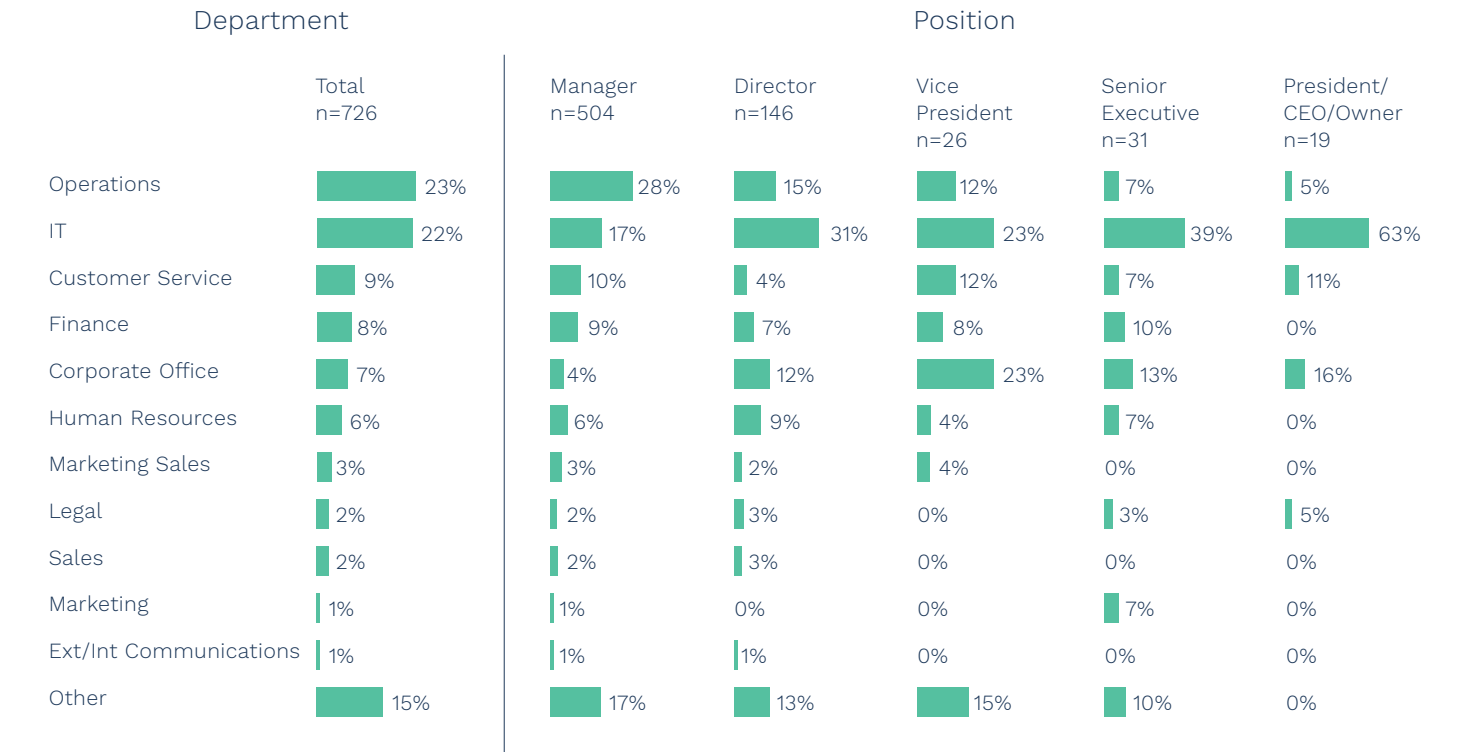
Research Methodology

Primary research of management throughout Canada and the US on their usage, perceptions, and policies regarding social and mobile communication technologies in the workplace.

- Survey conducted utilizing a subscription-based survey platform branded as Golfdale (3rd party, independent research)
- Fieldwork access through Panels, ensuring representativeness in the US and Canada based on respective census information (i.e., region, age, gender)

- 350 US management; 350 Canadian management
- Defined as full time employees or owners, management level or above
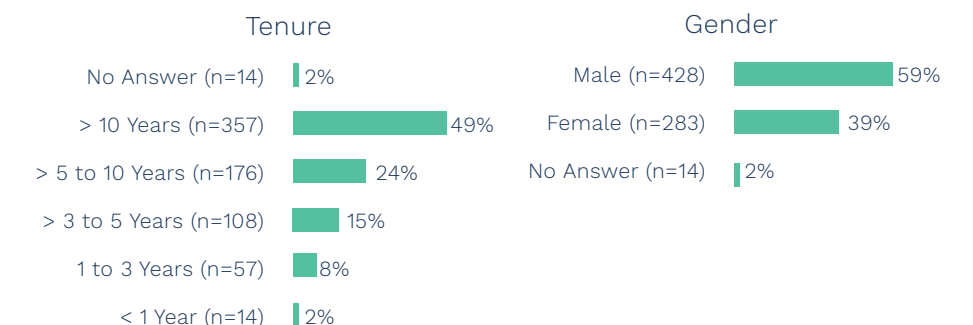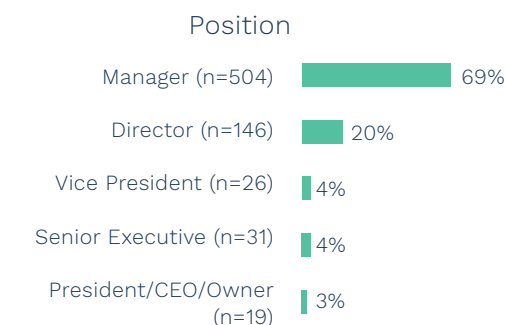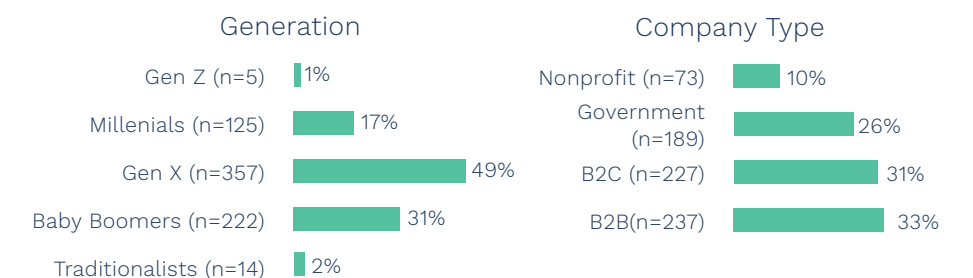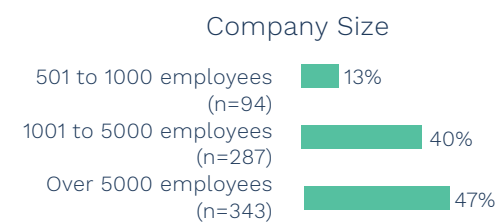- All surveys conducted online

Management Demographics

Department / Position

Department	Total n=726	Manager n=504	Director n=146	Vice President n=26	Senior Executive n=31	President/ CEO/Owner n=19
Operations	23%	28%	15%	12%	7%	5%
IT	22%	17%	31%	23%	39%	63%
Customer Service	9%	10%	4%	12%	7%	11%
Finance	8%	9%	7%	8%	10%	0%
Corporate Office	7%	4%	12%	23%	13%	16%
Human Resources	6%	6%	9%	4%	7%	0%
Marketing Sales	3%	3%	2%	4%	0%	0%
Legal	2%	2%	3%	0%	3%	5%
Sales	2%	2%	3%	0%	0%	0%
Marketing	1%	1%	0%	0%	7%	0%
Ext/Int Communications	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Other	15%	17%	13%	15%	10%	0%

Note: * Sales, Marketing, Ext/Int Communications are only options on the US survey

Company Size

- 501 to 1000 employees (n=94): 13%
- 1001 to 5000 employees (n=287): 40%
- Over 5000 employees (n=343): 47%

Generation

- Gen Z (n=5): 1%
- Millenials (n=125): 17%
- Gen X (n=357): 49%
- Baby Boomers (n=222): 31%
- Traditionalists (n=14): 2%

Company Type

- Nonprofit (n=73): 10%
- Government (n=189): 26%
- B2C (n=227): 31%
- B2B (n=237): 33%

Position

- Manager (n=504): 69%
- Director (n=146): 20%
- Vice President (n=26): 4%
- Senior Executive (n=31): 4%
- President/CEO/Owner (n=19): 3%

Tenure

- No Answer (n=14): 2%
- > 10 Years (n=357): 49%
- > 5 to 10 Years (n=176): 24%
- > 3 to 5 Years (n=108): 15%
- 1 to 3 Years (n=57): 8%
- < 1 Year (n=14): 2%

Gender

- Male (n=428): 59%
- Female (n=283): 39%
- No Answer (n=14): 2%

Employee Demographics

Department

Categories: Corporate Office, Customer Service, External Communications, Finance, Human Resources, Internal Communications, IT, Legal, Marketing, Operations, Other (please specify), Sales

Legend:
- Individual Contributor
- Manager
- Director
- Vice President
- Senior Exec. (SVP, EVP, C-Suite)
- President/Ceo/Owner

Gender

- Male: 52%
- Female: 48%

Tenure

- > 10 Years: 19%
- > 5 to 10 Years: 24%
- > 3 to 5 Years: 23%
- 1 to 3 Years: 27%
- < 1 Year: 6%

Company Size

- Over 5000 employees: 17%
- 1001 to 5000 employees: 14%
- 501 to 1000 employees: 14%
- 2 to 500 employees: 45%
- 1 (self employed): 10%

Generation

- Gen Z (born after 2000): 1%
- Millenials (1985-2000): 31%
- Gen X (1965-1984): 39%
- Baby Boomers (1945-1964): 27%
- Traditionalists (pre-1945): 1%

Company Type

- Nonprofit: 15%
- Government: 17%
- B2C: 30%
- B2B: 39%

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