

Why now is a golden opportunity for employee advocacy

The crisis is a pressing time for many, with uncertainty looming in the air and many businesses having to think on the fly. It can be very tempting to put communication strategies on hold. However, now is more important than ever to be communicative, especially with many of us now confined to our homes.

A recent [survey](#) from Kantar found that web browsing is up by 70% and social media usage is up by 61% since the lockdown. Your audience is more present than ever before and so, having the right brand messaging is integral.

With the impact of COVID-19 being omnipresent, it is fair to say that most industries and companies will be impacted. [Sprinklr](#) found that there were 19 million mentions across the social media, blogs and news sites of COVID-19 related terms in a single 24-hour window.

“It’s clear that coronavirus is the first global pandemic that is unfolding on social media with

unprecedented volumes of conversations happening every second.” – Grad Conn, Sprinklr chief experience and marketing officer

Communications are especially important in today's digital world and having a good communication plan in place is essential; including communicating to your employees first. So how can employee advocacy be transformative for your brand during this time?

What is employee advocacy?

It is a social media marketing strategy whereby employees are empowered to become company ambassadors by sharing approved content in order to amplify the brand voice. With our lives being heavily intertwined with digital media, it is important for brands to view employees as individuals that can help support business and provide greater reach.

Research finds that brand messages are shared 24x more frequently when employees post them. In fact, employee shared posts reach 561% further than posts by corporate social media profiles. In today's climate of decreased consumer trust and uncertainty, employees should be at the core of communications to reinform the company message.

Mastercard acknowledges that one of their strongest assets is its large workforce; therefore, they have deployed a social media employee advocacy program with 400 of their employees. Partners and employees are incentivised to share brand-related content with designated hashtags like #mastercardambassador. L'Oréal incites advocacy by allowing employees to share content and stories hashtags such as #LifeAtLoreal.

Employee Advocacy in the context of the crisis

As the world attempts to adapt to a new way of life, companies that already have established employee advocacy programs or that are looking to instigate one must be careful to not ignore the current Covid-19 crisis but instead, purposefully acknowledge it, in the right way. When implemented correctly, employee advocacy can enable brands to join the conversation in a positive

place during this time. The aim should be to highlight the important topics through your employee advocacy program that are relevant to what the public and other companies are experiencing at present.

4 ways Employee Advocacy can help during crisis communication

Communicating company actions

After the crisis, people will remember companies and brands that have been useful or at least close to their community. With prevalent distrust in governments, businesses have had to be on the front line. 63% of those surveyed believe that brands are playing a critical role in addressing the current challenges of COVID-19.

55% perceived that brands responded more quickly and effectively to the pandemic than their government did, demonstrating the faith that consumers have in their brands and the companies that stand behind them. Employee advocacy programs can help a company communicate their actions towards the pandemic.

Building trust

In times of crisis, proximity and sharing are opportunities to strengthen trust. Employees can provide the human element to communications which are perceived to be more honest and approachable than a corporate message. This means that a company message can be relayed through its employees in order to add more credibility. It also provides multiple dialogues rather than one-way communication, as the public can interact and engage with the brand.

Displaying unity

Displaying a unified front can be a powerful way to face a crisis as a company. This is a chance to show that you will stand together as an entity. This also highlights the fact that you are prioritising your employees during this difficult time

Spreading positive stories

In a time where we are inundated with negative stories, employees provide the voices of genuine experiences of how the company is giving back. The employee advocacy platform is a great way to communicate the internal actions of the company and also spread positivity during difficult times. Starbucks is a leader in employee advocacy, and they have successfully built their Employee Advocacy program over the years.

They have an army of brand advocates posting on behalf of the brand; sharing updates on their personal accounts. During the crisis, employees have shared positive stories about how they have helped NHS staff by providing food to help them get through.

Today, communication is more important than ever. Rather than keeping quiet, brands should use this time to be transparent and build trust with their audience. As employees are the most trusted and reputable ambassadors, incorporating and employee advocacy into your communication strategy can be highly impactful. Developing effective employee advocacy that accurately represents your brand and communication strategy can be comprehensive.

JIN is a digital influence agency that specialises in delivering high-impact employee advocacy programs that supports brands to mobilise their workforce to act as powerful brand ambassadors. JIN has served over 200 clients in Europe and around the globe to promote their leadership and build their reputations as well as accelerate the growth of their communities and businesses.

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