

**Togethr**

**GO & FIND  
YOUR  
CUSTOMERS**

Introduction to  
**EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY**  
**FOR RETAIL**

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**Work together to Share your brand to Grow your business**



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## Togethr is the one stop shop for employee advocacy.

The **Togethr Hub** provides resources, how-to guides and templates. The **Togethr App** is a high performance advocacy platform. Togethr has been created by the UK's most experienced employee advocacy team.

### Togethr Hub [wearetogethr.io/togethrhub](https://wearetogethr.io/togethrhub)

#### PREPARE toolkits

##### Intro to employee advocacy

- Employee advocacy advance check
- Business case builder

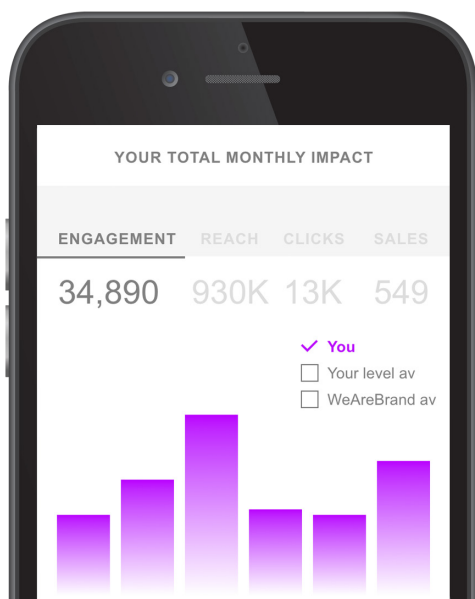
#### LAUNCH toolkits

- Recruiting and onboarding
- Content and comms planner
- Motivation and rewards
- Reporting and measurement

#### SCALE toolkits

- Scale an employee advocacy programme
- Convert from manual to tech
- Create a power user programme

### Togethr App [wearetogethr.io/togethrapp](https://wearetogethr.io/togethrapp)



#### Employees

- Share quickly and easily on behalf of your company
- Work together to create impact
- Build your skills with sharing tips
- See your impact with personal feedback

#### Advocate manager

- Target activity to different segments
- Optimise performance with ready to use report templates
- Automate common actions based on different triggers



## Executive summary

### **Employee advocacy empowers your own employees to share content on social media, as themselves, about the brand, products, company purpose and working culture.**

By activating conversations across the business, you build trust with customers, communities and new audiences through meaningful, relevant and timely conversations.

Since the Covid-19 global pandemic began, companies of all sizes have had to respond in real-time to the impact of lockdown and changing customer behaviours. As people spend more time online, companies have increased their digital marketing activity including social media.

Since lockdown 1, significantly more employees are sharing work related stories on social media of how they have supported colleagues and customers, how their company has helped the NHS and local communities. And more people are talking about which companies are ethically, environmentally and socially sound and those that are not.

All businesses need to be seen, to stay relevant and to engage with customers and new audiences. Encouraging your own employees to share genuine stories and engage with people on social media matters now more than ever.

#### Harvard Business School: Employee Advocacy in the context of the crisis

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.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/what-customers-need-to-hear-from-you-during-the-covid-crisis>



# Understanding employee advocacy

## 1. What is employee advocacy?

Employee advocacy happens when employees in a company are empowered to become trusted ambassadors for the brand, sharing or creating content on their own social media platforms, as themselves.

Employees have a high degree of trust in their individual networks and are able to talk with integrity and authenticity about the company they work for, the brand and their products.

Employee advocates are people within the company who are willing to talk about brand purpose in a genuine way, and share their knowledge and expertise to new and existing audiences on social media.

People trust people like themselves over brands, CEOs, corporations.

Edelman Trust Barometer

Prior to lockdown, **Edelman Trust Barometer** cited in January 2021 the following influencers as holding the most sway with customers:

Company technical expert	59%
Academic expert	59%
A person like yourself	53%
Regular employee	40%
Government official	39%

## 2. How employee advocacy increased during Covid-19

Since the outbreak of Covid at the start of 2020, retail businesses globally have experienced major disruption. A year on and retailers are feeling the pain.

Normal thriving towns and cities in the UK are empty, with shops and restaurants having been forced to close their doors to customers for months.

With budgets tight, marketing teams are asking themselves where should they put their effort? What opportunities are staring you in the face that you might be missing?

With more people browsing on social media, it's the right time for brands to engage with prospects and customers online.

The solution many retailers turned to in the previous lockdowns was to empower their employees to share content directly to their own followers and friends on social media - massively increasing their reach and engagement and customer loyalty.

- More companies have activated their employees in 2020/21 to reach customers in new ways.
- Employees are demonstrating the extent to which they can influence customers on social media through authentic, meaningful conversations on social media. [See case studies library]
- A new type of employee advocate is emerging - less sharing curated content, more brand ambassador/micro-influencers in their own right.

Clients of **Togethr** saw 106% increase in engagement in first month of lockdown, and an increase of 80% in impressions in month 2.

Your employees offer a clear route through to sharing authentic stories, and breathing life into brand comms to reach new and existing audiences.

### COVID-19 case study | John Lewis & Partners

John Lewis & Partners mobilised **personal stylists** to engage customers via video chat. During lockdown John Lewis started offering virtual appointments on Instagram using video calls to run styling appointments with personal stylists and customers. Following a trial they ran earlier in 2020, pre lockdown, as part of their #WeArePartners employee ambassador programme, they were able to respond to the Covid situation by scaling up the service across multiple teams with hundreds of customers signing up.

During lockdown 1, **other partners at John Lewis** signed up to lend a hand at Waitrose, stacking shelves, packing vans, delivering groceries to customers. Helping Hands was all about reaching out to the community and supporting those most in need. There was a huge amount of pride among partners who gave time away from their usual role to support local communities, colleagues and their employer.

### COVID-19 case study | Post Office

The Post Office empowered their Postmasters to share content directly to their local communities - Together Stronger was about connecting postmasters to their community, sharing information to support people to access key services and when/where to buy produce in their local neighbourhood shops.

77% of consumers want brands to talk about how they are helping them in navigating the new every day life.

Survey by Kantar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.kantar.com/Inspiration/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Barometer-Consumer-attitudes-media-habits-and-expectations>

## COVID-19 case study | Waitrose



In July 2020, Vogue UK<sup>3</sup> broke new ground putting key workers on their cover. One of those selected was Anisa from Waitrose, the leading UK supermarket with a well established employee advocacy

programme, #WeArePartners, launched by the Togethr team in 2017.

Anisa described the whole experience as “Crazy - but so nice to be appreciated in this way! It’s nice being a key worker. My job was not something that was that big of a deal before. But now it’s like we’re important. We have to be here, regardless of what’s happening in the world. It’s more than just a job now.”

**Many Waitrose partners** played a key role in keeping the shelves stacked, getting deliveries to customers but it was their work to the wider community that also caught my attention including delivering care packages to NHS workers at hospitals; food packages for the homeless; delivering essentials at nursing homes; keeping the fire service in fresh supplies.

Crazy - but so nice to be appreciated in this way!

Anisa, Waitrose

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.johnlewispartnership.co.uk/media/press/y2020/waitrose-cashier-turns-british-vogue-cover-star.html>



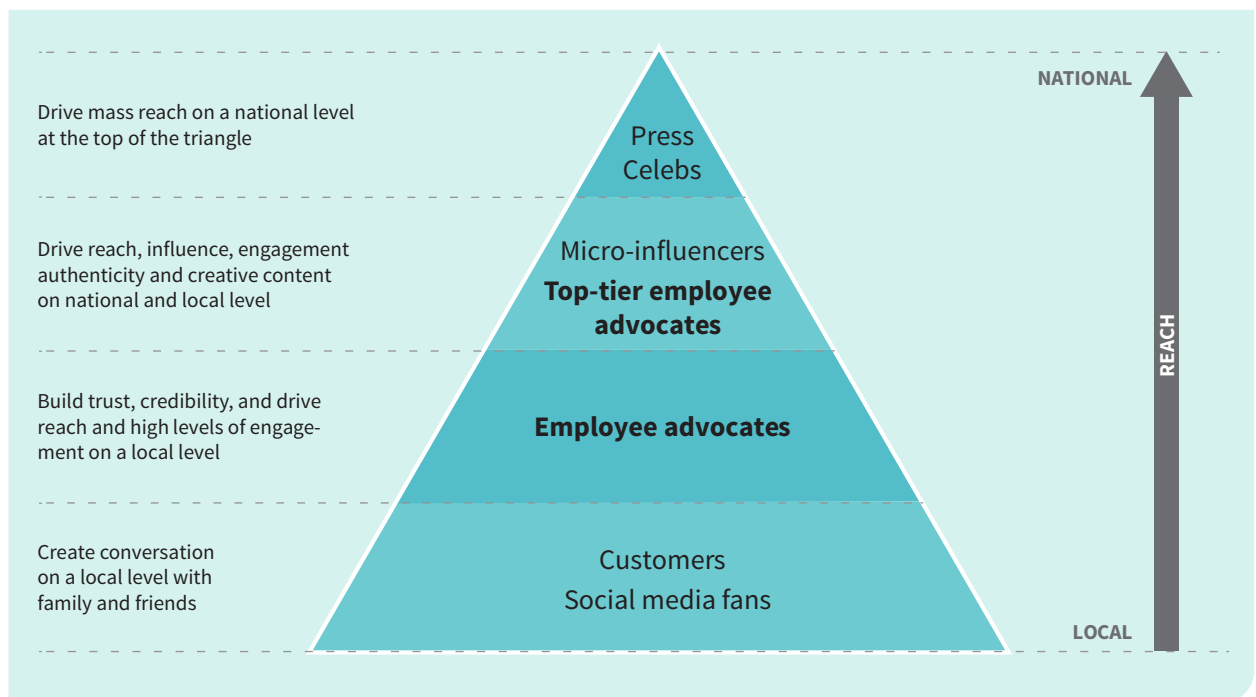
### 3. How employee advocacy integrates with other marketing?

On the buyer journey, people want to read reviews and recommendations from trusted sources and will make informed choices based on those recommendations from their network, including friends, family and peers.

Word of mouth has always been the most powerful form of advertising, never more so than now. During lockdown billions of people moved to online conversations and buying.

The social influence triangle shows how advocacy fits with the wider earned media, influence framework.

Forbes cites a study by Kantar of 25,000 consumers across 30 markets showing engagement increasing **61%** over normal usage rates.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> <https://www.kantar.com/Inspiration/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Barometer-Consumer-attitudes-media-habits-and-expectations>



## PART 2

# 5 reasons why brands need to consider employee advocacy

## 1. Employees play a key role in humanising your brand

The most successful employee advocacy programmes are born from companies that have:

- a clear purpose
- a strong brand with great story to tell
- are already empowering their employees and celebrate a strong culture at work
- have a large proportion of employees who are customer/client facing

### Main use cases for employee advocacy:

Marketing  
Talent acquisition  
Social selling  
Distributed marketing

### The most successful programmes in 2020 cross multiple sectors and use cases.

Most often seen in the following B2C sectors:

- Apparel and Fashion
- Retail including supermarkets
- Health and wellness
- Beauty and cosmetics
- Travel

Sectors with untapped potential include leisure, hospitality, education, environment, franchises

## 2. Build stronger relationships across the buying journey with employee advocacy marketing

Brands need ways to engage with customers online now more than ever. Word of mouth helps customers decide what to buy, brands loved by others in their tribe, and learn about new brands.

Brands have been switched onto the impact of digital word of mouth on consumer decisions for a few years now. For brands optimising their customers' experience across the buying journey, earned media plays a key role at the awareness and consideration stages. It is now imperative for brands looking to convert new customers and maintain loyalty with existing customers.

Creating a team of employee ambassadors as influencers who can build relationships with a wider network, share products, offers, new stock and what's popular is a new evolution in influencer marketing.

Web browsing and social media usage has seen a massive spike in 2020/21, due to the impact of Covid-19 and lockdown. 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.

A clear majority of consumers expect advertising to make a positive contribution to society during Covid: 'Talk about how the brand is helpful in the new everyday life' (77%) 'Inform about their efforts to face the situation' (75%) and 'Offer a reassuring tone' (70%).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.kantar.com/Inspiration/Coronavirus/COVID-19-Barometer-Consumer-attitudes-media-habits-and-expectations>

### 3. Consumers trust people like themselves more than brands

There's been a radical shift in how people want to communicate and in the type of content they want to consume on social media. The desire for more authentic, raw content and wanting to engage with people like themselves is now well established.

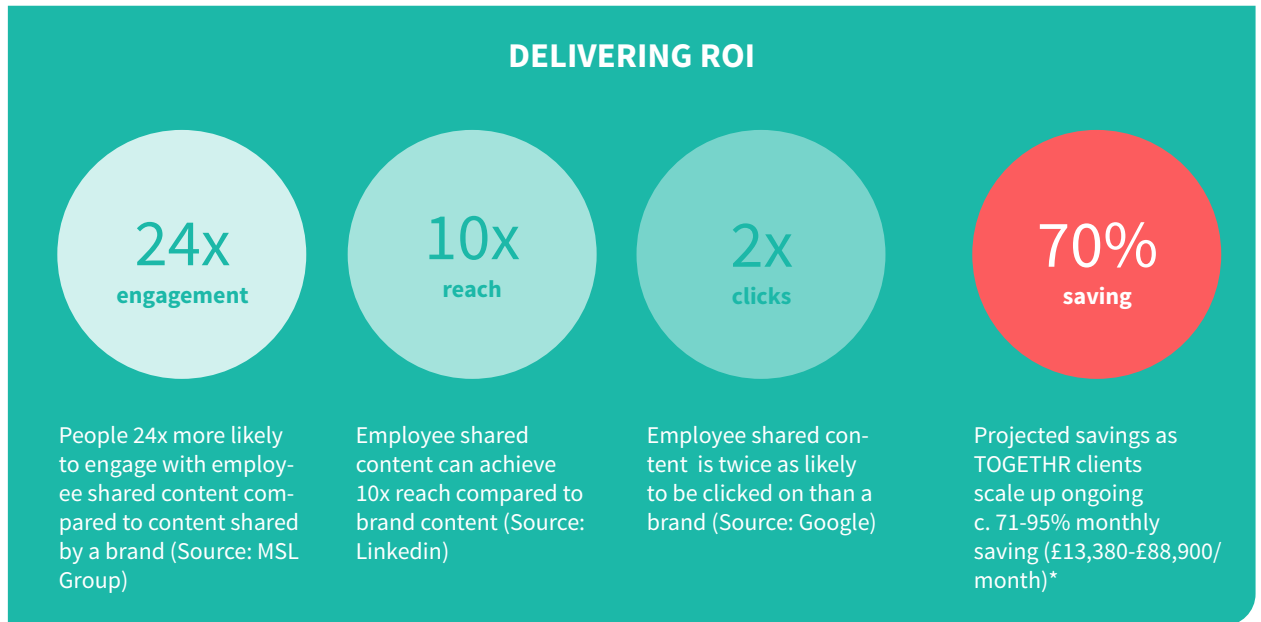
There's a strong sense of community rising on social media. At it's best, social media connects people with people. It offers a channel for brands to create a more authentic story and employees are a part of this. Employees are able to contribute to brand building to reach relevant audiences and create meaningful relationships with customers to ultimately drive business growth.

#### **Harvard Business School: Employee Advocacy in the context of the crisis**

**63%** of those surveyed believe that brands are playing a critical role in addressing the current challenges of COVID-19.

#### 4. Data shows employee advocacy delivers on ROI

Looking at the value brands can harness internally from their biggest influencers, their own employees, is a fast-growing, cost-effective and profitable opportunity.



When employees share content they achieve double the impact of brand marketing with a click-through rate twice of that seen by their company according to LinkedIn.

Because of this it makes a compelling case for why more brands are adopting employee advocacy programmes.

\* Data based on use of Togethr app



## 5. The new normal: keeping employees engaged and aligned as remote working continues

Since lockdown, there has been a huge increase in thought leadership articles about how to keep employees engaged and aligned as remote working continues.

Some companies such as Twitter and Facebook have announced employees can now work from home indefinitely forever, others are looking into 2021 or beyond before they bring staff back into the office. For others, it's about changing the purpose of bringing staff together, with an emphasis on creativity and collaboration in the office, with day to day working carried out at home.

The future of the office is uncertain and this is a critical time for companies to keep employees onboard, aligned, and motivated.

An employee advocacy programme can help achieve this.

“The decision to give employees control of marketing its iconic Christmas campaign on social media has not only driven stronger consumer take-up of in-store services for John Lewis & Partners, it's also improved employee engagement.”

CMO Australia<sup>6</sup>

6 <https://www.cmo.com.au/article/657161/employee-social-marketing-drives-brand-engagement-in-store-experience-john-lewis-partners/>



## PART 3

# Getting started - what to consider

An employee advocacy programme unites colleagues around a brand's vision and values. It also allows you to create and measure what type of content employees like to share on their social networks, helping inform other areas of the business.

### Running a pilot or small test group

Starting with a smaller group of 'early adopters', you can run a pilot to establish if an advocacy programme is the right cultural fit for your company, if your employees want to be part of it and share content on an ongoing basis, and what type of content works best for different groups of employees.

### Manual programmes vs tech enabled

A pilot can be run manually - with up to 30 or so advocates. If you want to scale and bring in more advocates, you'll need a tech solution to measure impact and make the running of the programme more efficient. In the Togethr Hub Launch subscription you'll find all the resources you need to run a manual or tech programme, before scaling up across the business.

### Building a business case

If you're a larger company, to get full buy in to roll out and scale up your programme, you will need to present your business case to your Exec team.

In your business case, include stats on expected ROI, what skills and roles you may need in the team to launch, an idea of

#### Consider:

Running a pilot or small test group

Manual programmes vs tech enabled

Building a business case

Getting buy in from employees

Choosing the right advocacy platform for your organisation

a roadmap and roll out, budget required. You will find all these resources in the Togethr Hub Business Case Builder toolkit.

### **Getting buy in from employees**

When you're selling in the idea of an employee advocacy programme to employees, for example when you are recruiting early adopters, focus on what's in it for them. If you don't, they'll lose interest quickly.

### **Choosing the right advocacy platform for your organisation**

If you're using a tech solution, choose one that allows you to offer lots of different content to different groups of advocates. Think beyond just curated content and get creative with the content challenges you ask advocates to share.

Built in gamification such as leaderboards, badges and points keeps employees motivated. Full reporting with a live dashboard and ability to dice data by advocate groups, platforms, date, metrics are all key to optimising your programme ongoing.

## 1. Recruitment

One of the most common questions we get asked is how do we get employees to sign up to an employee advocacy programme. It depends how you look at it.

One thing that can cause a lot of confusion with an employee advocacy programme is whether you see it as something colleagues should join without question as part of their job or whether you need to sell the idea to them to encourage them to sign up.

It will almost certainly be the latter. And the key word here is 'sell'. You need to treat communicating about an employee advocacy programme as an internal sales activity.

As in sales you need to:

- clearly demonstrate the benefits and value to the employee for getting involved.
- answer common questions, deal with objectives and overcome barriers.
- share testimonials, feedback and reviews. You need social proof.
- demonstrate what you're asking them to do

**A good place to start when thinking about this is B2B sales.**

If you run a business selling to other businesses one of the most popular sales techniques is email marketing.

Put simply, you identify your target audience group(s), buy or create lists of potential customers in these groups and send them an email inviting them to buy your product.

There are many techniques and frameworks people have developed on what to put in these emails.

How you keep them short, how you identify their pain point, how you describe the benefits not features of your product which solves this pain point, how you back this up with some kind of testimonial, example client or case study.

Some techniques suggest you start by referencing something about the recipient that is relevant and personal. Others suggest you ask for the recipient for help in looking for the right person and that they refer you to them.

However, because the recipients are busy people, often receiving hundreds of emails, and typically avoiding sales emails, they will often miss your message.

To get round this many techniques recommend you leave it a short period of time, then send a version of the same email.

Then you send a further follow up email which says you'd still love to chat to them, do they have time or is there someone else better placed to have that chat. Some models suggest you even send a fourth.

Evidence shows that it is often only on the 3rd or 4th emails that anyone even responds. And the people who respond are mainly the people who want your product.

Sometimes they respond because they're fed up with receiving your mails or don't know who you should chat to. But the point is, this approach elicits a response that helps you refine your sales strategy further.

So what if you'd stopped at the first or even the second email? Would you have assumed that they weren't interested and moved on? If so you'd have been missing a trick.



Let's move over to finding colleagues in your company to join an employee advocacy or ambassador programme. As mentioned earlier, it is important you understand that you need to sell the idea of employee advocacy to your colleagues.

Break these down into a set of 4 emails.

EMAIL SEQUENCE			
Email 1	Email 2	Email 3	Email 4
<p>You need to be clear what will motivate the employee to get involved, eg how the programme will help them personally (eg add to CV, improve social media skills).</p> <p>Start with what's in it for them and how easy it is to get involved. Then include greater purpose such as helping the business grow.</p> <p>Include feedback, testimonials from current participants if possible.</p>	<p>The next email is a reminder of email 1; reiterate the benefits to the employee of joining the programme, inspire them to be part of something that benefits them, benefits their team.</p>	<p>This email can give a bit more detail including covering common Q&amp;A and barriers. Tell them how much time it will take (5-10 minutes a day), how they receive content, what is expected of them, what benefits they can expect to see (increase in followers, raise their profile of their professional expertise, be involved in an innovative project).</p>	<p>This email is a call to action - last chance reminder, don't miss out with an invitation to join a workshop/zoom call to hear about it. And send them an article on how employee advocacy helps them build their personal influence.</p>

### What else?

Leave a gap of around 4-5 days between each. As soon as someone responds remove them from the sequence. Reply to them within a few hours, keep their enthusiasm growing and make them feel involved.

## 2. Content

Firstly, don't over complicate things. Look at what you're already doing. Use your imagination and take what you already have and translate it, improve on it, find new angles on existing practice.

You will already run social media campaigns. Employee Advocacy isn't any more complex and while there are slight differences, it's far from a dark art.

First, look at what content you're already sharing that promotes and grows your business. Then translate it into content your employees will want to share and - most importantly - will be able to share authentically.

You need to imagine what these existing posts will look like when posted on social media not by the brand but by different members of your team.

It's very important to work backwards from this. Real people - not a brand - are going to share these posts. They have to be authentic. Here's how to do this:

1. Consider and segment different groups of people working in your business.
2. Put down what their jobs are, what their expertise is, whether they're customer facing or not.
3. Take the brand messages and content you already have (from your brand social media/advertising/website etc)
4. Translate your brand message into language how you think each of these employee groups might naturally talk about these messages on their personal social media.

“Brands need to start with an audience-centred perspective. Too many brands start with: ‘What do we want to talk about? What’s our message?’ They’re not thinking about how content flows from the people who create it to the people who ultimately are going to consume it and all the different diversions within that.”

Steve Rubel, Chief Content Strategist, EdelmanW

This last step is VITAL. Imagine the style these employees would write in, based on your social media research into them. It is important it's real.

After you've done this, do some simple tests:

- Could you imagine your colleagues actually speaking like this online?
- Would it make sense to customers to see these posts if that particular employee shared it?
- What if you were to post something like this on your personal social media? Would you cringe or feel okay about it?

If it would make you cringe, it'll probably make them cringe. If the content passes the above tests, you're on track. If it doesn't, try to think what other stories might resonate with customers more than the content you're working with.

It can help to visualise your ideas and place them alongside other posts in your employee's social media feeds. How do they fit?

That's it. Honestly. That's the heart of your content approach and you're already most of the way there.

### 3. Motivation

Why will your employees become advocates? Why will they share content on your behalf?

The usual expectation is that in order to share your employees will need to be rewarded to do so. With at the very least some form of gamification where people can earn points, badges. Or even where you earn physical rewards for sharing.

Starwood Hotels Associate Director of Social Media and Search Marketing, Abbey Reider, has some unconventional advice for brands looking to entice advocates:

She says: “don’t reward them”.

The less “quid pro quo” the relationship, she says, the more likely it will evolve organically, and become stronger over time.

How do you engage employee advocates? What motivates them if it’s not about rewards?

Best selling author Daniel Pink who’s written a lot about changing the world of work has identified 3 things which he believes are the key motivators for sharing...

#### **Autonomy, Progress and Purpose**

#### **Autonomy**

There’s a significant body of research which says that if you give people more autonomy over their work they will work harder and achieve better results.

This is something we can all understand. We all know that feeling from some job in our past when we felt we had to look like we were working even if the job was done. Where we were being micromanaged or where we had to check with the boss every new idea we had before trying it.

Whereas, if we give people some autonomy over what they do they are more likely to do it and do it well and to want to come back do it again.

This applies to advocates. Any advocacy programme must be built on trust. Some companies are fearful when it comes to encouraging their employees to start talking about them online. But if you actually give them some freedom - don't try to force them to engage in a particular way, they will surprise you. Our clients have had great success with this approach.

## **Progress**

In a number of studies the single biggest motivator at work was found to be making progress in meaningful work – this is when people were most motivated, wanted to work and wanted to come into work the next day.

Things like pay and job title were important but not as important is making progress.

Again this is something we can all relate to - we like to get better at stuff. And this where we come back to rewards. Progress depends on feedback.

We need info on whether we're making progress. So if rewards are used as a way of showing you're making progress – if they're deployed as a feedback device – they are a great motivation tool.

But if used as the point of the exercise – if they are the only



reason I'm doing this – you'll get lazy, cheating, compliant behaviour. Points, badges and prizes need to be neutral in terms of motivation sense. A subtle distinction but very important. We need to use rewards to help advocates learn, grow and make progress.

**Points.** They can earn points, eg by sharing posts or completing tasks,

**Levels.** They can progress through levels eg by the number of points they have.

**Rank.** They can see how their rank against other advocates with a leaderboard.

**Surprise & Delight gifts.** Make sure you don't redeem points for rewards. They should be used to incentivise and highlight certain types of desired behaviour.

## Purpose

Understanding the “why” is the part of the equation that most of us tend to forget. A lot of research shows purpose is a performance enhancer at work.

For most advocates there are dual purposes. A purpose for the business which they want to support and a purpose for themselves. You should highlight both.

**To support the business.** This could be to work together to go and find customers to help the business successfully come out of lockdown.

**To support their personal growth.** For example to grow their skills in social media and their influence and relationship with customers. It could be something they might want for their CV.

# Togethr

## Introduction to employee advocacy for retail

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