

ADVOCATES

vs.

INFLUENCERS

vs.

EMPLOYEES

A practical guide to understanding the true motivations and potential impact of each target, and how to approach a strategy for success.

THE GOLDBLOCKS EFFECT

There is a lot of material out there touting Brand Advocate, Influencer and Employee Advocate strategies as the most important method to growing a business. With convincing arguments for each, how do you figure out what approach is **just right** for your brand?

Ask yourself, what is my company's main marketing need?

DEFINING INFLUENCE

HELLO

I AM A

BRAND ADVOCATE

I SUPPORT, PROMOTE AND AMPLIFY THE INTERESTS OF A BRAND THROUGH ORGANIC WORD-OF-MOUTH

92% OF CONSUMERS WORLDWIDE TRUST RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FRIENDS AND FAMILY ABOVE ANY OTHER FORM OF ADVERTISING

HELLO

I AM AN

INFLUENCER

I PROVIDE REACH TO A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE THROUGH MY OWN NETWORKS AND BROADCAST A MESSAGE ON BEHALF OF A BRAND

26% OF THE POPULATION INFLUENCE THE PURCHASING ACTIVITIES OF THE OTHER 74%

HELLO

I AM AN

EMPLOYEE ADVOCATE

I'M EMPLOYED BY A COMPANY FOR WAGES OR SALARY. I LOVE THE COMPANY I WORK FOR.

AN EMPLOYEE ADVOCATE IS TWO TIMES MORE TRUSTED BY CONSUMERS THAN A CHIEF EXECUTIVE

IDENTIFYING NEED

**BRAND
ADVOCATES**

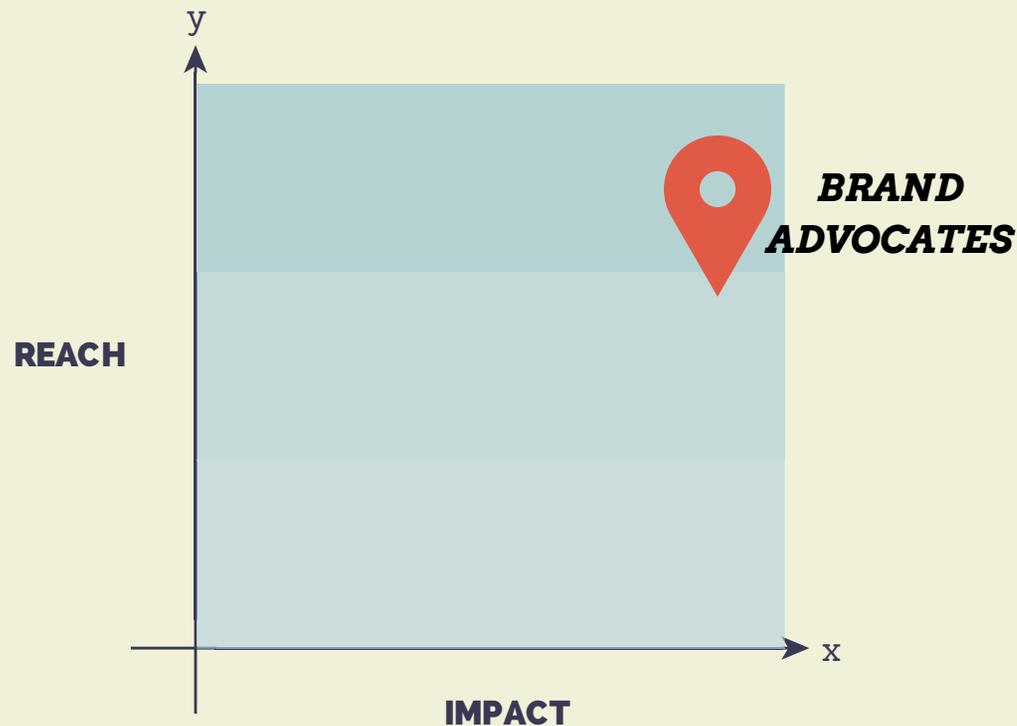
INFLUENCERS

**EMPLOYEE
ADVOCATES**

NEED



Long-term relationships with customers, steady growth



IDENTIFYING NEED

**BRAND
ADVOCATES**

INFLUENCERS

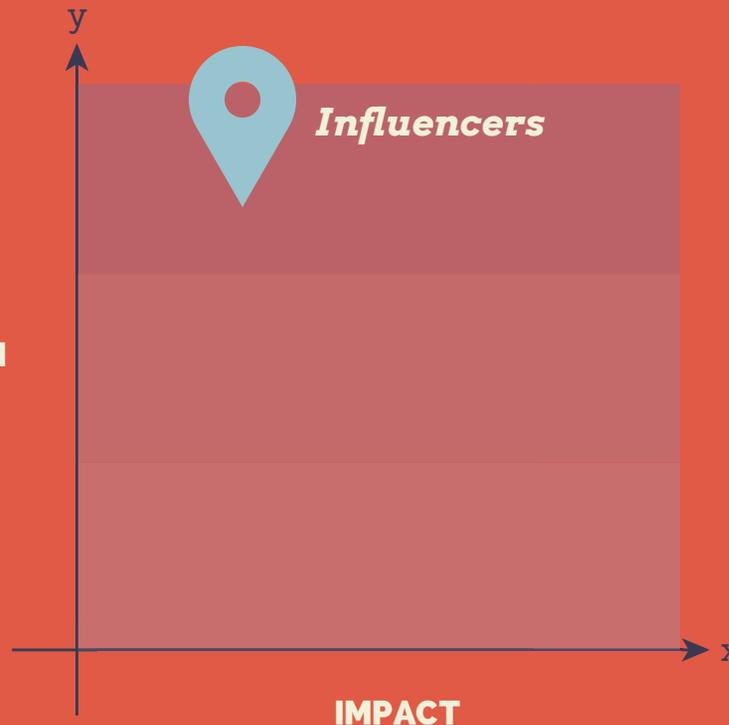
**EMPLOYEE
ADVOCATES**

NEED



Short-term, immediate impact,
specific expertise

REACH



IMPACT

IDENTIFYING NEED

**BRAND
ADVOCATES**

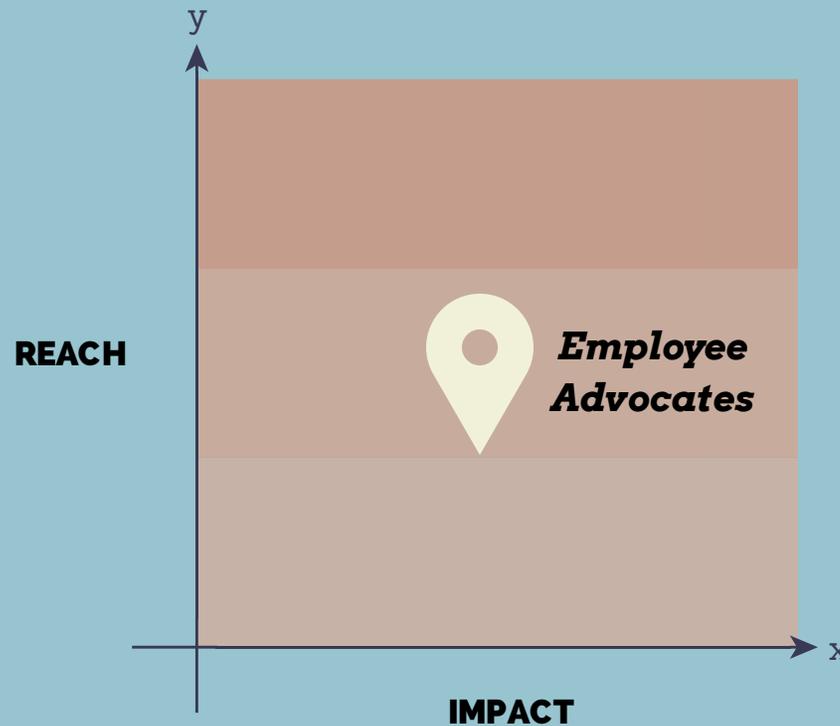
INFLUENCERS

**EMPLOYEE
ADVOCATES**

NEED



Long-term retention, spread of consistent brand message



ADVANTAGES OF AUTHENTIC ADVOCACY

An advocate is more than just a customer, fan or influential member of a brand community. A true advocate will stand up for a brand, tell their friends and family members about an experience and drive new business for a company simply because they believe in its vision and promise. Simply put, advocates grow brands through their passion, knowledge and influence throughout their personal networks. Consider the facts:

- **It is 6-7 times more costly to attract a new customer than it is to retain an existing customer (Sparked)**
- **50.4% of companies cannot identify their most loyal customers (Acxiom)**
- **12-15% of consumers are loyal to a single retailer, but they represent 55-70% of sales (Northwestern)**
- **92% of consumers worldwide trust recommendations from friends and family more than any form of advertising, up 74% in 2007 (WOMMA)**

Every brand should covet a core group of customers that know and defend its quality, promote its values, and love its products. The good news is, they are already there, just waiting to be found. Brand advocates are in every brand community, they just need to be surfaced and nurtured. Advocacy is a long-term strategy that pays off exponentially as a brand community matures.

PROS



EXPERTISE



LONG
TERM



AUTHENTIC



REACH



FREE

CONS



DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY

INFO

EXPERT ADVICE

Jason Falls' 3 Actions Brands Should Take to Build Advocacy:

- 1 *Make sure your product or service is share-worthy*
- 2 *Produce content or social capital in some form to fuel your audience to share*
- 3 *Make sharing your content/social capital intrinsically rewarding for the advocate. They need to feel like they did something good because they shared your material.*

Jason Falls is the founder of Social Media Explorer and the Senior Vice President of Digital Strategy at Elasticity



DO

Nurture existing brand advocates understanding history and context, championing their content, and soliciting their opinions.

While many advocates may have developed affinity for a brand on their own, the continued growth of that love is dependent on the steps a brand takes to nurture the relationship. There are many ways to increase the strength of the brand to advocate relationship, including VIP experiences (event or content), reaching out for their unique expertise and celebrating their user-generated content.



DON'T

Expect the relationship to be one-sided.

Much like a garden won't bloom without proper care, the passion of brand advocates will wither without proper appreciation. A focus on building a relationship with the superfans in a brand community before asking for something in return will ensure continued loyalty to that company's products or experiences. A hard ask before a proper bond has been formed can quickly backfire, sending that influential advocacy elsewhere to be realized.

THE IMPERMANENCE OF INFLUENCERS

In the ever-populated arena of marketing, influencers should be looked at as short-term mercenaries. They exist to provide additional resources to a well thought out strategy, they can help increase visibility and validation for brands when needed, and when leveraged properly, can yield returns above and beyond initial investment. However, brands also run the risk of looking both inauthentic and out of touch when influencer campaigns fail. Take for example, Samsung's partnership with celebrity Ellen Degeneres at the Oscars:

APPEARED TO BE A SAMSUNG USER



IS ACTUALLY AN IPHONE ADVOCATE



85% OF USERS SAY SOCIAL NETWORKS HELP THEM DECIDE WHAT TO PURCHASE (IBM)

PROS



EXPERTISE



REACH



EASILY IDENTIFIED

CONS



SHORT-TERM RELATIONSHIP



INAUTHENTIC



PAID



INFO

EXPERT ADVICE

“For any topic, country, geography, or any specific cause, one percent of the people typically drive the conversation; those people are the influencers. This goes for data centers, social business, social media or travel, where one percent of the population is driving the conversation. These influencers are important, sometimes high maintenance and sometimes cost money, but they are the people that create the conversation other community members look for.”

- Michael Brito, Group Director, W2G Group



DO

Use influencers as a way to grow legitimacy within a specific community of customers or to expand the reach of a message to a wider audience.

While influencers may be mercenaries by their very nature, there are great advantages to having the resources of increased numbers when heading into battle. Taking extra steps to find the influential voices in specific communities is an extremely effective way to expand into a new market, solicit feedback on a product, or promote a unique experience to a niche community.



DON'T

Confuse an influencer strategy for an advocacy strategy

The problem with paying for influence is that competitors have access to money, too. As a result, the very influencer that champions a brand this week may highlight the strengths of its adversary the next. If a brand's current or potential customers were listening closely enough to that influencer when it lauds its own products, its customers will be listening when he or she promotes a competitor's message as well. While more organic than traditional advertising, influencer marketing is often no less inauthentic.

THE POWER AND PERILS OF EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY

Successful Employee Advocacy programs should empower employees to be the human faces of a brand. By giving these company representatives the autonomy to be experts on the products and experiences they are responsible for, it gives the brand an opportunity to spread word of mouth by tapping into that employees personal network. In order for the strategy to work, employees must:

- 1. Have some form of social influence**
- 2. Be an expert in a core area of that company's business**
- 3. Be fully aligned with company positioning**

Without those three identifiable traits, an employee should not be carrying the torch of advocacy for a brand.



Employees have
10X more followers than
corporate accounts

PROS



EXPERTISE



LONG
TERM



EASILY
IDENTIFIED



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CONS



CAN BE
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PAID



INFO

EXPERT ADVICE

“Building a solid business case for a large transformation program like Employee Advocacy, is a game changer. You’ll either get support or your execs will move on to the next request in their long queue. Are you prepared to demonstrate the cost to value ratio? Do you know what motivates the key stakeholders you’re going to need to sell your business case to? If you don’t, the likelihood of securing the necessary resource and investment to get your program off the ground is slim to none.”

- Susan Emerick, founder, Brands Rising



DO

Empower a select group of influential, loyal employees to educate and engage customers during every step of the sales process.

Employees are human beings. Talented human beings, in fact. Learning to invest in their social capital by highlighting their strengths and expertise is a great way for companies to grow their loyalty. Once that level of affinity for the brand and understanding of the products and services they're selling are realized, amplifying their voice is a great way to authentically build a brand's overall reach.



DON'T

Incentivize (monetarily or otherwise) all employees to share or create promotional content.

Employees are paid members of a brand ecosystem. Given that their livelihood depends on the success or failure of the very company they are promoting, there is no scenario in which an employee advocate can surpass the authentic value of a brand advocate. A smart company will develop a collaborative environment in which both influential bodies of a brand community can engage and educate one another in a self-motivated way. The moment a brand encourages behavior that only serves itself (like blindly asking its employees to share a promotion) is the very moment its legitimacy is squandered.

THE BRASS TACKS

In the previous pages, we've broken down the pros and cons of Advocate, Influencer and Employee-based marketing strategies. Here is a quick summation of the differences between the three that you should always keep in mind as you proceed to leverage each group.



ADVOCATES

IRREPLACEABLE

In addition to being free, advocates offer the greatest opportunity for brands to spread word of mouth in a sustainable and authentic way.

INFLUENCERS

SUPPLEMENTAL

If advocates are the star of a good marketing strategy, influencers should operate as the best supporting cast. There to provide a boost of expertise and reach when needed, influencers can provide great value when properly leveraged to amplify but not define a brand voice.

EMPLOYEES

SHOULD COME NATURALLY

There are no better experts in regards to a company's products or services than the very employees behind their production. Ensuring that employees believe in the quality and values of the brand they represent enough to advocate for it shouldn't be a part of a company's marketing strategy, it should be a part of its culture. Learning to leverage the most influential and knowledgeable members of its workforce should at this point be a comfortable reflex, not a tactic.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW CROWDLY CAN HELP YOU LEVERAGE YOUR ADVOCATES?

Crowdly is an advocate marketing platform that helps brands identify, activate, and understand their most passionate advocates and brand ambassadors. Using Crowdly, brands can build a direct channel to a core base of advocates and leverage them to increase word-of-mouth, new customer acquisition, and customer loyalty.

If you'd like to speak with a Crowdly team member, click the Let's Talk button to the right, send an email to hello@crowdly.com, or call 855-CROWDLY

