



# Essential Data to Launch Your Employee Engagement & Advocacy Strategy

**BAMBU**  
by Sprout Social

**ABERDEEN**  
GROUP



# The Aberdeen Research

In the last three years, data revealed a tremendous opportunity for employers to leverage employee advocacy and engagement programs to drive measurable results. This report exposes the essential role these programs play in boosting business performance of large organizations.

The first section features research from Aberdeen on the impact of employee advocacy programs, and in the second section, we'll take a closer look at how employers can implement a solution that enables their workforce to be company advocates on social media and beyond.

**ABERDEEN**GROUP

# FROM EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT TO EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY: A NATURAL PROGRESSION

August 2016

→ **Howard Adamsky**, Senior Research Analyst,  
Human Capital Management



## Report Highlights

p3

**Companies with an employee advocacy program report a 26% increase in year over year revenue.**

p4

**Best-in-Class organizations are 51% more likely to enable employees to search and access relevant articles in content repositories.**

p5

**Best-in-Class organizations are 3x more likely to enable employees to share content with their social networks.**

p7

**Best-in-Class organizations are 30% more likely to have a platform for employees to view and share job openings.**

Employee advocacy is defined as the promotion of an organization by its staff members. This level of commitment, of impassioned championing of the organization by the very employees who compose it, is a powerful tool for success. This competitive advantage is a palpable and driving force of heightened engagement, and should be a goal within every organization. This report will explore what top organizations are doing to realize the value of employee advocacy.

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**Organizations that are able to sustain robust employee advocacy programs reap a host of benefits.**

Organizations today are little more than the employees they hire. New employees join, look around, and determine the politics and players of the organization. They adapt to their surroundings and attempt to fit in. Most organizations of any repute understand the importance of employee engagement and do what they can to encourage it. This is a wonderful achievement, because the alternative is a dreary and often downtrodden workforce.

On the other hand, even if heightened engagement is achieved, it may not be enough. So, can engagement be taken to the next level? Yes, and this is where employee advocacy comes into play. It can make a true, measurable, and meaningful difference for an organization's success. It strengthens the brand and increases social presence in ways that really matter. Let's look at some of the Aberdeen data and see what engagement and advocacy have to offer.

## Engagement as a Precursor to Advocacy

The bottom line here is simple; engagement is derived from commitment, and commitment can *only* be invited. It cannot be cajoled, forced, demanded, or required. Try to achieve it with a hammer, and it will not happen. Commitment comes bit by bit, and it happens because leadership actually leads by exemplifying the values that guide the organization. Leaders must do what is required to build the type of organization that employees want to work for. Only then will they accept the invitation of engagement.

Advocacy is the next step. It is the prevailing expression of a key collective force — your employees. It is power from within; it creates brand awareness, a consistent social presence, and a

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### Aberdeen definition:

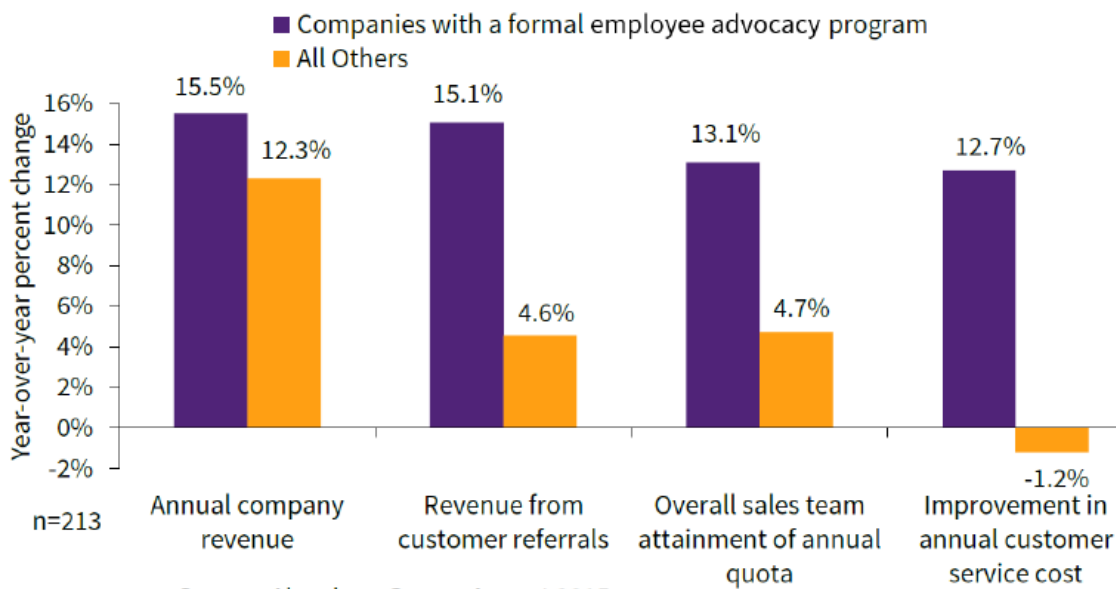
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Best-in-Class is defined by Aberdeen as organizations whose performance *(Overall Human Capital Management initiatives that result in superior results)* puts them in the top 20% of all survey respondents.

## 3

message that comes from the people who matter most within the organization. That is a very powerful place to arrive at.

**Figure 1: A Glimpse into the Financials**



Aberdeen research demonstrates that organizations with a formal engagement program realize a 26% greater year-over-year increase in annual company revenue compared to those who are without one. (15.5% vs 12.3%). This is no small feat by any standard. This increase can be attributed to the fact that engaged employees impact the organization in ways that make a measurable difference. They do so through their ability and desire to go the extra mile in order to meet a deadline, achieve a goal, or create a successful outcome, because they are committed to the organization's success.

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**Organizations that have an employee advocacy program in place enjoy significant gains in overall sales team attainment of their annual quota, amounting to 2.7 times that of All Others.**

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Further data shows that organizational revenue that comes from customer referrals soars to levels that are more than three times greater than organizations who do not have this program in place (15.1% vs 4.6%). This can be attributed to the fact that referrals increase when the story and messaging relating to the company is on target and positive. Engaged employees who reach a level of advocacy, often going over the top in terms of their need and ability to contribute, and customer referrals are surely a good place to see this appear. More than that, it is a requirement for those organizations that wish to dominate their market.

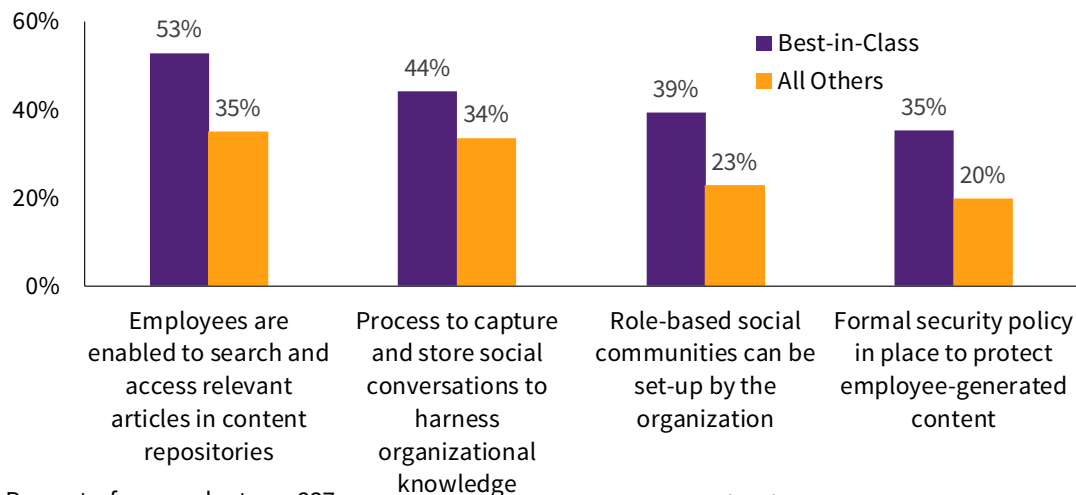
Organizations that have an employee advocacy program in place enjoy significant gains in overall sales team attainment of their annual quota, amounting to 2.7 times that of All Others (13.1% vs 4.7%). They also see 11 times the improvement in annual customer service costs than All Others (12.7% vs. -1.2).

It should be noted that Best-in-Class companies do not achieve this distinction haphazardly. Best-in-Class status is the result of strong, insightful leadership that is as committed to the success of its employees as it is to the success of the organization as a whole. Such commitment invites engagement in ways that in turn encourage advocacy.

True to this thinking, Aberdeen research shows that Best-in-Class organizations encourage employees to engage. They do this by enabling them with solutions that make sense and actually work effectively. The Best-in-Class provide employees with the autonomy to operate within the organization. These solutions don't only enable employees, but also connect them to their coworkers.

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**Figure 2: Key Capabilities: Engagement and Advocacy Build Success**



Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2016

A look at Aberdeen data demonstrates that Best-in-Class organizations are 70% more likely than All Others to report that they have the capability to set up role-based social communities within the organization (39% vs 23%). This is truly important, because the ability to communicate successfully, share information, and collaborate in real time can be a substantial competitive advantage. Even beyond that capability, employees can feel comfortable enough to connect and engage, because Best-in-Class organizations are 75% more likely to have a formal security policy in place that is capable of protecting employee-generated content than All Others (35% vs 20%). This is important, because employees need to feel this level of trust. They need to feel safe and encouraged to share knowledge and experiences on a technology platform that they can use confidently.

**Best-in-Class organizations are 75% more likely to have a formal security policy in place in order to protect employee-generated content.**

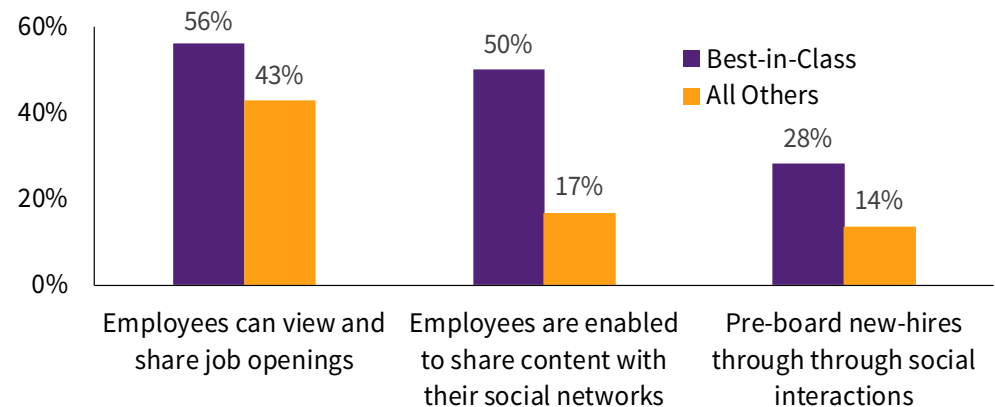


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**Advocacy is the next step. It is the prevailing expression of a key collective force — your employees. It is power from within; it creates brand awareness, a consistent social presence, and a message that comes from the people who matter most within the organization.**

The importance of these Best-in-Class capabilities cannot be overemphasized, as they utilize engagement as a precursor to advocacy. The organization's ability to connect its employees to one another and capitalize on their over-the-top commitment is a key factor to building a great organization. This is because organizations that utilize online solutions that allow employees to truly connect, communicate, and work collaboratively see increases in vital areas, as the above data demonstrates. Over time, this empowered and connected workforce builds greater organizations that are agile enough to meet new and complex challenges.

**Figure 3: Utilizing Social and Sharing to Amplify the Voice of the Employee**



Percent of respondents, n=237

Source: Aberdeen Group, June 2016

The ability to share job openings is just part of the picture when it comes to the way the Best-in-Class encourage employee interaction. Aberdeen research demonstrates that Best-in-Class organizations are 30% more likely to have the capability for employees to view and share job openings. Having a technology platform that allows this, coupled with a workforce that is actually engaged enough to advocate in this way, creates a very powerful message. By encouraging employees to advocate for



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the organization on social media and share job openings with the world, organizations not only broadcast openings, but improve their brands. It conveys the message that the employees think they work for a great company and want others to know about it. This is very powerful stuff in everything from brand building to overall organizational messaging.

Further Aberdeen research shows that Best-in-Class companies, as shown above in Figure 3 above are three times more likely (50% vs. 17%) to enable employees to share content with their social networks. Once again, amplifying the voice of the organization through employee advocacy creates a buzz and attracts the right kinds of press and attention.

Coupled with the ability to pre-board new hires through social interactions two times more often than All Others (28% vs 14%), Best-in-Class organizations understand the need for platforms that allow employees to advocate for the organization. They do this in ways that take full advantage of the stunning power, possibility, and reach of social media.

The importance of this type of thinking simply cannot be underestimated, as it speaks to the fact that there is nothing as potent as a workforce that is engaged and advocating for the organization.

## Conclusion

We live and work in a very busy world. We sleep with our smartphones next to us. We are bombarded with information and requests and digital images every moment of the day. The competition for our time and attention is maddening, and it

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**Best-in-Class organizations seem to understand the need for platforms that allow employees to advocate for the organization. They do this in ways that take full advantage of the stunning power, possibility, and reach of social media.**

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often leaves us exhausted and wondering what the point of it might be.

The time for organizations to utilize social media to speak with one voice has arrived. Organizations must also utilize platforms that provide the tools required to create smarter and more rapid communication. With people utilizing social media more each day, among other emerging online communities, it's easier than ever to engage the right people with the right message. This is powerful advocacy for your organization. It garners the type of attention you need to amplify the voice of your workforce in ways that support relationships with customers, enhance social recruiting, and create brand ambassadors.

As people are very likely to be introduced to your website and your company through the messaging and power of social media, employee advocacy can support those in both marketing and sales. Employee advocacy can do everything from driving traffic for lead generation to supporting sales and enabling organizations to create and publish content across all social channels. Moreover, the reach and nature of social media, coupled with the amplification of the voice of the workforce, can be a door-opener in terms of starting the right types of conversations with the right types of people.

The bottom line is simple. The need to build a brand, and to create awareness and solidity that is consistent, carefully crafted, and broadly based is the very definition of what it means to compete with other organizations, and, ultimately, win.

## Key Takeaways

Best-in-Class organizations understand the benefits of employee engagement. They see the need for employee advocacy if they

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**Employee engagement and advocacy go hand in hand to serve each other. And the best possible results from advocacy come from an engaged workforce. Thus, a workforce with advocacy opportunities tends to be more engaged.**

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## 9

are to capitalize on the power and the presence of their workforce on social media. Some recommendations include:

- ➔ **Start with employee engagement.** Employee advocacy is best served by a workforce that is operating efficiently and showing positive signs of employee engagement. Employees have to be on the same page and all pulling in the same direction to meet organizational goals. As with most critical initiatives, these programs begin with leadership commitment. If the drive for engagement and, ultimately advocacy is not top of mind, committed to, and championed by those in the C-suite, then the initiative is at risk for limited success.
- ➔ **Develop organizational capabilities that support employee engagement.** Organizations that want to support employee engagement and advocacy need to ensure that both organizational knowledge and employee-generated content are captured, accessible, and shareable.

At the same time, they need to encourage interactions within the organization, across specific roles, and amongst external stakeholders. Employees that can't find and access information internally, let alone share it with their peers and social networks easily, will struggle to achieve the full power and brute strength that comes from engagement and advocacy.

- ➔ **Deploy technology that complements these capabilities.** Identifying, evaluating, and deploying the

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**Further Aberdeen research shows that Best-in-Class companies are 3x more likely (50% vs. 17%) to enable employees to share content with their social networks. Once again, amplifying the voice of the organization through employee advocacy creates a buzz and attracts the right kind of press and attention.**

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right social platforms that lead to the levels of engagement that support advocacy is critical.

The organization needs to seek out a solution that is aligned to its existing technical landscape, can be easily integrated into the organization's operations, and has the right types of customization and functionality. It must be supplied by an organization that will be a true partner — one that will be there with you to look at metrics and share results. They should be willing to work with you to do whatever is required to create the highest possible levels of success.

Employee engagement and advocacy go hand in hand to serve each other. And the best possible results from advocacy come from an engaged workforce. Thus, a workforce with advocacy opportunities tends to be more engaged.

Advocacy will not come without leadership to bless and support it, along with a strong internal team that can roll it out in a thoughtful and methodical way. People are naturally suspicious of the new and the different — or are too busy to care. Be sure to make the initiative relevant to them, not just the organization.

It will also require visibility and a level of internal buzz, as well as a management team that will encourage socializing and provide incentives. The move from engagement to advocacy can be a natural progression. It can be both effective and self-perpetuating, but this will only happen if the right people make the right decisions and are committed to getting behind supporting this key initiative.

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For more information on this or other research topics, please visit [www.aberdeen.com](http://www.aberdeen.com).

#### Related Research

*Seeking Engagement? Consider Comprehensive Employee Wellness*; May 2016

*Modernizing HCM: Why the Digital Employment Experience Matters*; February 2016

*Employee Engagement Today: Technologies to Optimize Efforts*; April 2016

*The Age of Social: Towards a System of Engagement*; August 2015

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#### About Aberdeen Group

Since 1988, Aberdeen Group has published research that helps businesses worldwide improve their performance. Our analysts derive fact-based, vendor-agnostic insights from a proprietary analytical framework, which identifies Best-in-Class organizations from primary research conducted with industry practitioners. The resulting research content is used by hundreds of thousands of business professionals to drive smarter decision-making and improve business strategy. Aberdeen Group is headquartered in Waltham, MA.

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# Putting Advocacy Into Action

Launching in the Enterprise

**BAMBU**

by Sprout Social



## The right way to empower your employees to be powerful marketers for your organization.

There's a trend with employee advocacy and engagement providers in that they want to provide organizations with a way to control employee engagement and social amplification through their employees rather than cultivate it organically. Providing a mechanism that ignores the authentic nature of advocacy and focuses on programmatic solutions to convert employees into social media spammers is the wrong approach. Automation focused features through these platforms has time and time again proven to fracture employee advocacy programs and prevent them from becoming truly successful.

**Bambu by Sprout Social** takes a different approach by providing an intuitive and easy-to-use repository of information that allows an organization to:

- Naturally and authentically communicate important business information with employees while increasing employee engagement (**Engage**)
- Enable and inform employees with content that matters to your business and to them, with custom messaging that is ready to share on social media. (**Enable**)
- Easily schedule and share approved content on social from any device. (**Advocate**)

### ORGANIZATIONS WITH EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY PROGRAMS

26%

increase in year over year revenue reported by companies with an employee advocacy program

51%

more likely to enable employees to search and access relevant articles in content repositories.

3X

more likely to enable employees to share content with their social networks.





# A Model for Employee Advocacy

Here's a model of how an employee advocacy program integrates within an enterprise organization without a technology solution in place to support it.

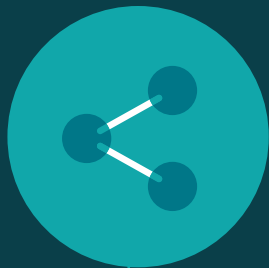


## 1. Select Participants

Strategically select the most capable advocates within your company. People you know will contribute positively to your program and have active social and digital footprints (e.g. Members of your PR, Marketing, Talent and Events teams that frequently handle social, blog content and communications). Add these participants to separate email distribution lists.

## 2. Create Content Strategy

Identify the types of content you want to distribute to your employees. This should be a good healthy mix of branded content, industry and influencer content and internal content / messages to ensure sustained employee engagement. Create lists based on the categories you've created and be sure to check them regularly.



## 3. Distribute / Curate

Facilitate content distribution manually via email newsletters. Provide pre-approved social messaging for sharing on appropriate social networks. Be sure to instruct participants to copy and paste social messaging to their native social profiles to ensure your pre-approved messaging remains in tact.

## 4. Advocate

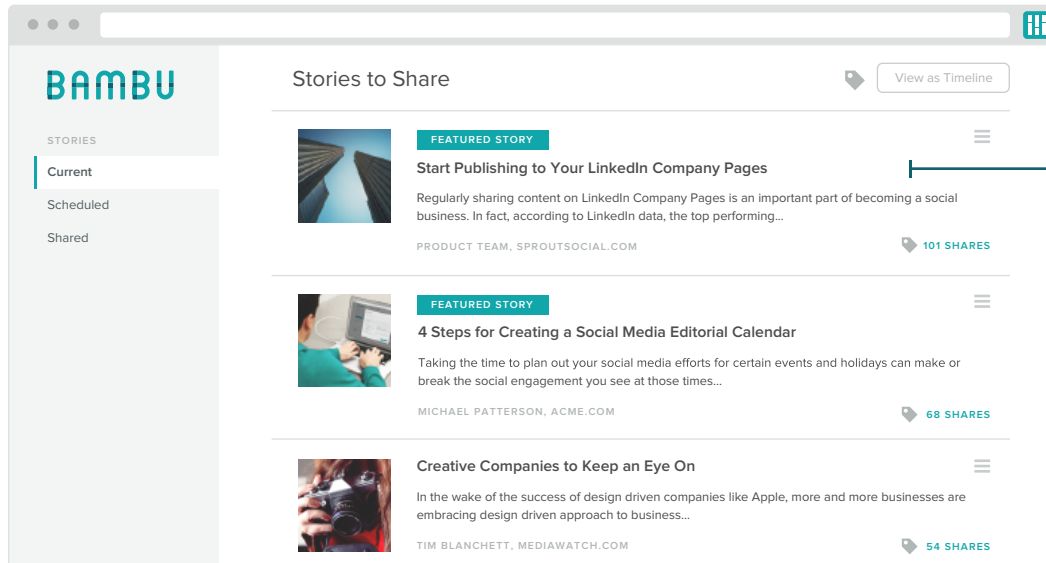
Once employees have received the content provided by individual curators, it's up to them to share to their social networks. They can do this using the pre-approved messaging provided by program administrators or create a custom message of their own.





## Activating the employee advocacy model with a technology solution.

How do we integrate a solution that addresses our employee engagement and advocacy needs? What are the key components and functions?

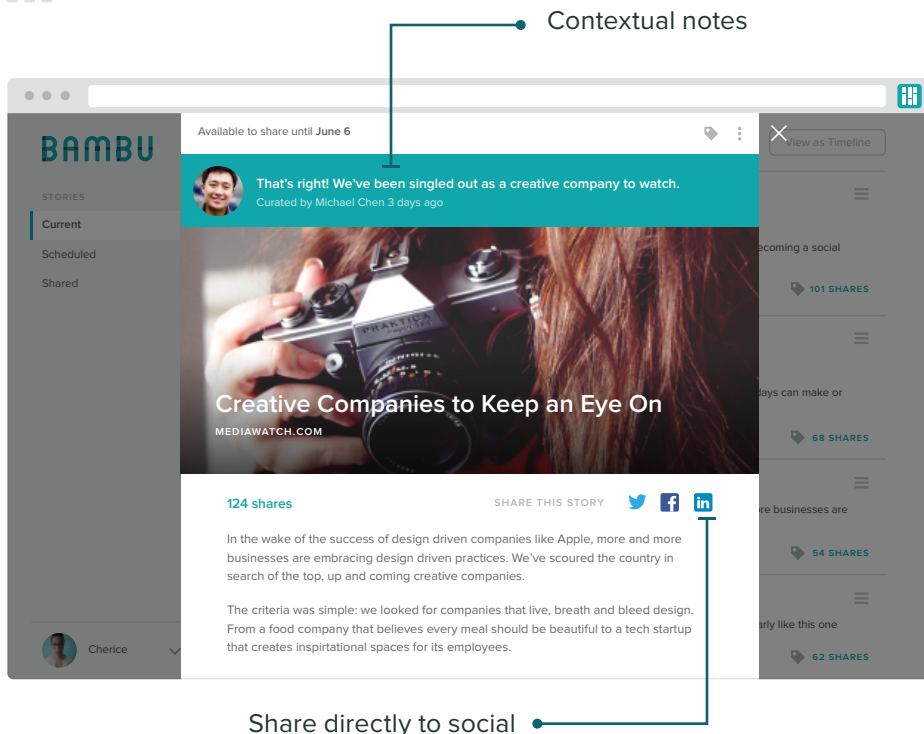


Management-approved, targeted content

### ENGAGE

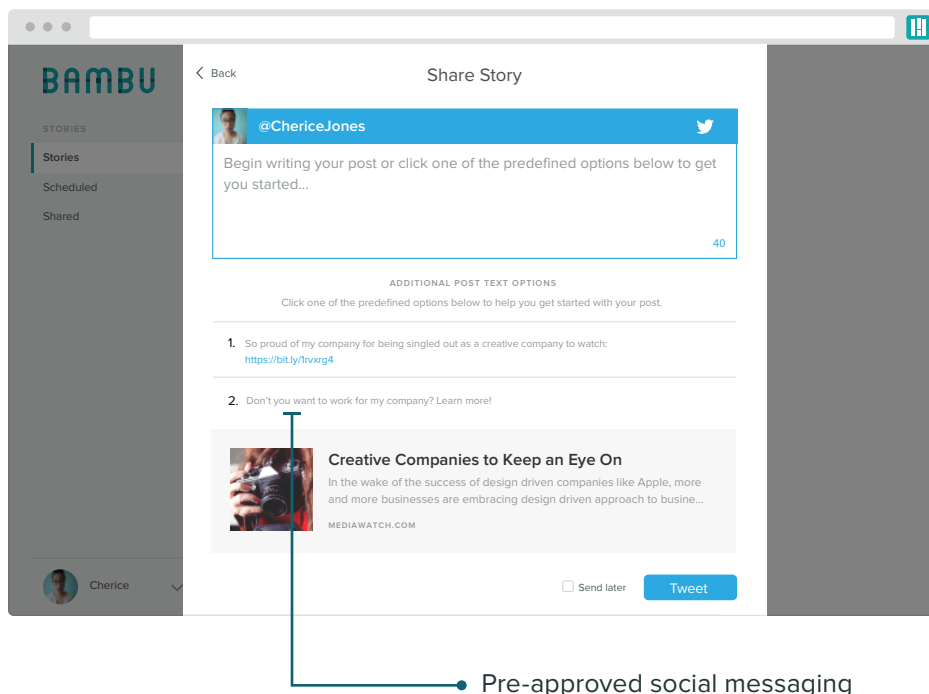
You need a repository that engages - and informs - employees through curated content on a daily basis. One that doesn't distract from their daily job activities, but actually helps to improve their job performance and happiness. Content that is management approved, tagged and targeted specifically to individual groups within your organization. This type of repository can be reported on and tracked, ensuring that your content is being seen and heard.





## ENABLE

The same repository allows your employees to use that content to educate themselves to become thought leaders within your industry. Messaging is crafted for each social network, with multiple options, to enable employees and remove any barriers or fear they may have over sharing “work” related content on their personal networks.



## ADVOCATE

This powerful repository now becomes a brand amplification tool, allowing your employees to share that content on their social networks with their Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn connections, without ever having to leave the platform.

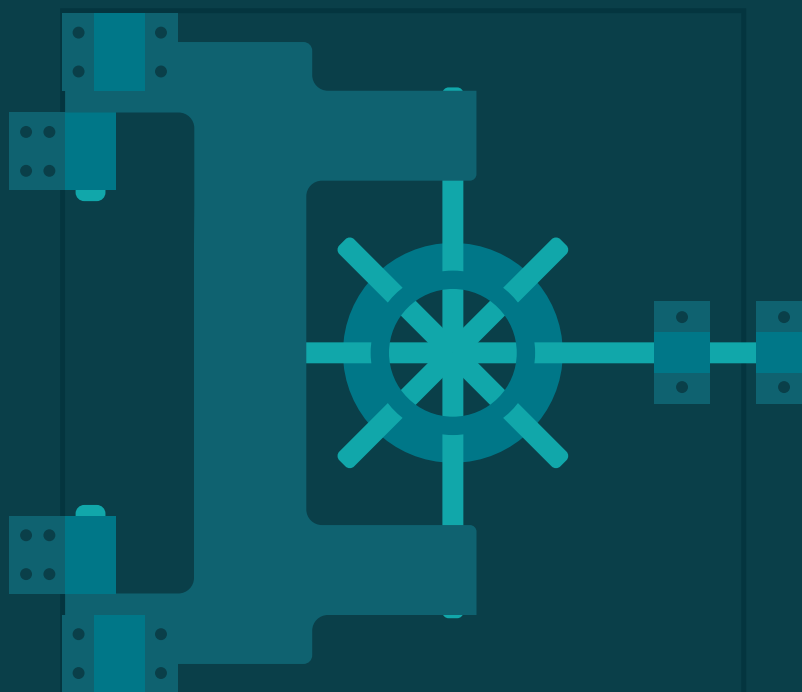


## Employee advocacy at scale requires the highest level of data security

Employee advocacy and engagement at an enterprise scale means technical and organizational compliance is of the utmost importance. Social media policies in regulated industries must be adhered to in order to allow employees to share content publicly, while technical requirements must be met to effectively integrate into your existing technology ecosystem. These are critical elements for complex and distributed organizations.

Bambu conforms to enterprise level technical compliance with:

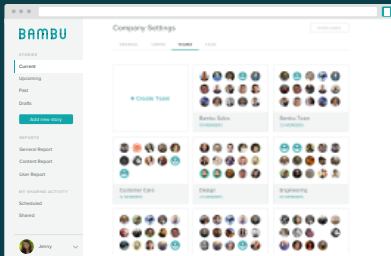
- Integrated SSO (single sign on) support that ensures your HR system of record will dictate access to the platform.
- A technical infrastructure that adheres to modern day enterprise grade security standards with full redundancy.
- Compliance focused features that help enforce social media policies such as locking social post text and suggested post text options.





# A Model for Employee Advocacy with Bambu

Here's how an employee advocacy program model looks like with Bambu.

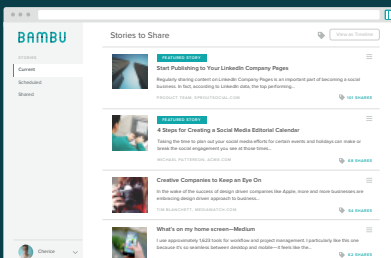
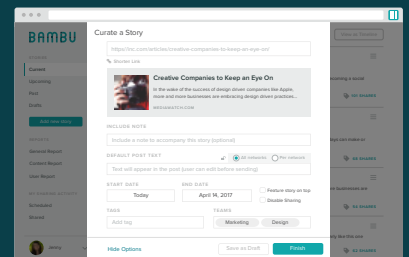


## 1. Select Participants

Easily add the most capable advocates within your company to Bambu. Ensure they have access to relevant content and permissions by organizing them into roles and teams. (e.g. PR, Marketing, Talent and Events).

## 2. Create Content Strategy

Source a good healthy mix of branded content, industry and influencer content automatically in **Bambu** from external sources such as websites, RSS feeds, social profiles, Feedly and more.

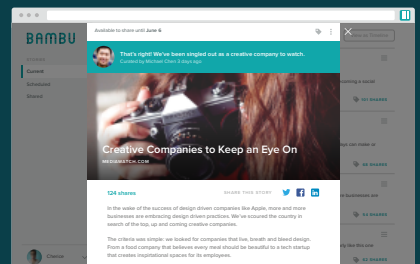


## 3. Distribute / Curate

Facilitate content distribution with the click of a button through via Email, Newsletter, Internal Communications tools (i.e. Slack, Yammer, etc). Provide pre-approved social messaging for sharing on appropriate social networks.

## 4. Advocate

Allow employees to easily read and share curated content to Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn without leaving **Bambu**.



# Use Case



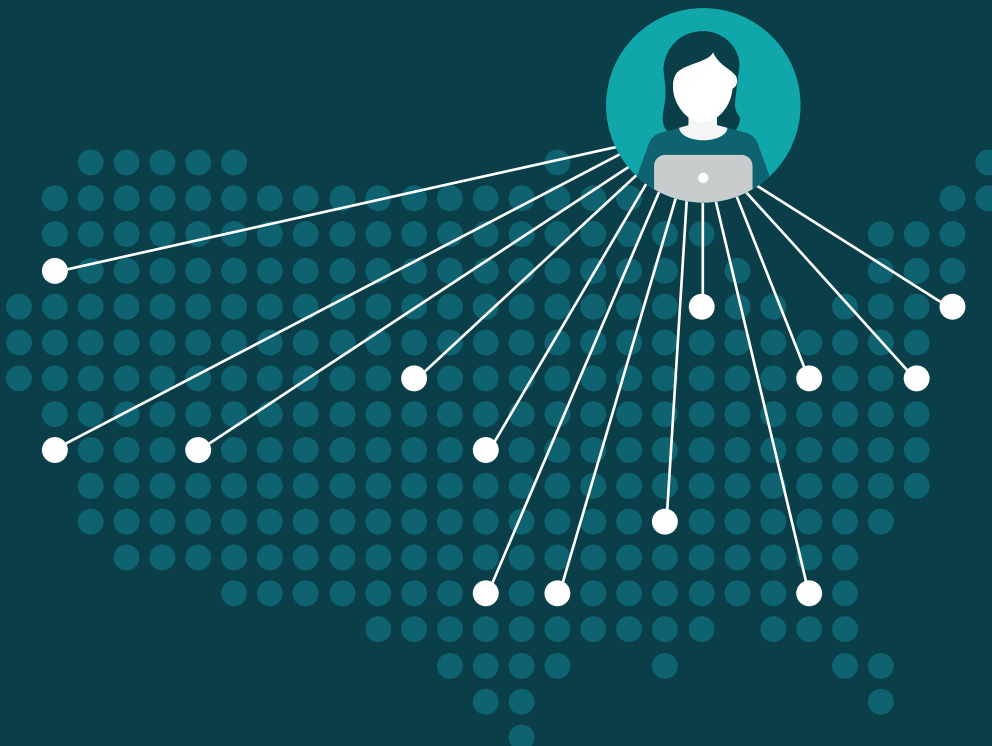
## #1. FRANCHISE / DISTRIBUTED WORKFORCE

### SUMMARY:

The largest organizations and franchises are dispersed across the globe. This makes communicating relevant and on-brand information to them difficult. It also makes it even harder to ensure that socially enabled content is compliant within their regulated industries. This use case highlights how easy and scalable an employee advocacy program can be for those types of organizations with Bambu. With compliance focused features like “Locked Post Text,” these companies can be sure they’re always in compliance.

"Bambu is a powerful tool that not only informs your employees and contractors of things that are going on within the company, but also increases their engagement with the company."

Alicia Eisenbise, Social Media Strategist at Coldwell Banker



# Use Case



## #2. INTERNAL / ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

### SUMMARY:

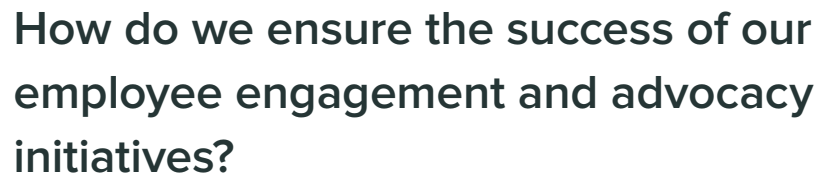
The following is a use case that highlights how easily large organizations can communicate important business information to different departments and teams, but with a social component to boost brand reach and awareness. Using Bambu to curate and store content, employee advocacy program administrators are able to target content easily, distribute that content internally and allow employees to share content on their personal social networks.

"There are some products you don't want to live without and Bambu is one of those products for my team. The way that it enables our employees to amplify our brand and become thought leaders in their field is priceless. "

Chelsea Larsson, Sr. Manager of Content at Zendesk





[illegible]

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## #1 DEFINE SUCCESS / SET GOALS

Employee advocacy programs help Marketing with brand awareness and internal communication; Sales with demand gen; Human Resources with lowered costs of recruiting through an increase in employee referrals.



Use these as a jumping off point to define the success of your program so you can map your goals to specific business outcomes.

## **#2 EXECUTIVE SPONSORSHIP**

With or without a technology solution in place, employee engagement is something that starts with executive level sponsorship. Their influence over everyone underneath them is significant.

To enable them to speak passionately about the business, trust needs to be established. If employees don't trust executives, their message is lost, and the program will stumble. Get one or more executives to "sponsor" the employee advocacy program to ensure success.

## **#3 REPORTING & ANALYTICS**

Employee advocacy programs must be tracked and quantified in order for stakeholders to gain any meaningful insights. As employees are empowered and enabled to share relevant business information and content on social, it is crucial that these activities be combined with accurate and insightful reporting and metrics to prove ROI, ensure continued success and scalability.

## **#4 RECOGNITION**

You must identify and recognize top contributors and performers within your organization. By treating employees as if they were your best customers and consistently giving praise and recognition, you can increase employee engagement, foster employee advocacy, and ultimately have an effect on your bottom line.

This is an extremely powerful and effective way in increasing employee engagement and performance.



## Advocacy tools from a trusted social business platform.

Bambu is an employee advocacy platform created by Sprout Social. Sprout builds award-winning software to power social communication between people and businesses. Our flagship product helps more than 17,000 leading brands more effectively communicate on social channels, collaborate across teams and provide an exceptional customer experience. Sprout is a Twitter Certified Product, Facebook Preferred Marketing Developer, LinkedIn Company Page Partner and Google+ Pages API Partner.

Request a demo at [getbambu.com](https://getbambu.com).