

# The Secret to Getting Social Media Shares from Your Employees

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Evelyn Starr

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Last Saturday while I was getting my hair cut, my stylist and I chatted about our plans for the weekend. After sharing mine, I asked about hers.

“Well...,” she said, “I have to be at a social media training session for the salon tomorrow from 10-2. They’re going to show us how to post and talk about the salon.”

Sunday is one of her two days off.

“Really,” I said, “Are they paying you for the time?”

“Nope.”

**This salon has handicapped its training session before it even started.**

Compelling an employee to attend a four-hour training on one of her two days off and not compensating her? That’s not going to excite her about the salon’s brand.

## Why People Share on Social Media

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By now the benefits of having employees share posts of social media have been well documented.

In the 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer study, 47 percent of the respondents said they found employees extremely or very credible as spokespeople. CEOs scored 44 percent on that measure, while board members got 41 percent.

**Employees were the most credible spokespeople in the company.**

But before you ask your employees to share your brand’s posts on social media, you need to understand why people share anything on social media.

The New York Times Consumer Insights Group conducted a study called [“The Psychology of Sharing”](#) and identified five reasons why people share:

1. **To build and deepen relationships.** 78 percent share information to stay connected to people they might not otherwise communicate with.
2. **To involve themselves in the world.** 69 percent share information to fulfill a need to feel valuable to others.
3. **To define themselves to others.** 68 percent share to express themselves, show what they care about and reveal who they are.
4. **To highlight causes or brands.** 84 percent support causes and raise issues they care about by sharing.
5. **To convey valuable and entertaining content.** 49 percent use sharing to inform others of products they care about, to try to change opinions and to encourage action.

Two major threads run through these five reasons.

First, as implied in the qualifier ‘social’ in social media, **relationships dominate the reasons for sharing.**

Second, people consider what they share to be a reflection of themselves.

## Most Online Reputations Are Carefully Curated

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Like pieces to a puzzle, **social media shares combine to create an online image of the person sharing.**

It's a public image.

Videos, articles, photos and comments that connections find credible, fun, entertaining and insightful contribute to an admirable image.

Inconsistencies, falsehoods, nasty comments and unwelcome promotion can chip away at a reputation over time. In extreme cases, a careless post can destroy it in a nanosecond.

And not just among connections. The ability to share anyone's post means the post can travel at lightning speed. The world can know about it in minutes.

Just ask [Alec Baldwin](#) or [Lena Dunham](#) or anyone who has had to apologize or retract a social media post.

**Every time someone shares something on social media their reputation is at stake.**

## Employee Social Media Sharing Needs to Be Voluntary

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When employees share something on social media it reflects on their personal image just like it does for everyone else.

**Employees will not risk their personal credibility** to post information that seems untrue to them about your brand.

The same goes for posts that are pure promotion. Employees will not want to waste their connections' time with something they may not value.

You can ask your employees to share your brand's posts and train them on how you'd like them to talk about your brand, but their shares will ring hollow unless they genuinely want to share them.

**For employee social media sharing to help your brand it needs to be voluntary.**

What's the secret to getting employees to share your brand on social media?

High employee brand engagement.

## High Employee Brand Engagement = Willingness to Share

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Employees engage with a brand when it has a purpose and values that resonate with them.

For the brand's purpose and values to resonate, they can't just be posted on a board or printed on paper. The entire organization has to live them. Everything employees experience must be consistent with them.

This is not just in the service of getting employees to share on social media.

**Having a culture that aligns with the brand's purpose and values and engages employees is the path to a stronger brand** and better business results.

In her book *Fusion: How Integrating Brand and Culture Powers the World's Greatest Companies*, Denise Lee Yohn makes the case that employee experience is as important as customer experience and that the two are inextricably linked. Moreover, companies that invest heavily in employee experience are:

- Included 11.5 times more often in Glassdoor's Best Places to Work;
- Featured 4.4 times more often on LinkedIn's North America's Most In-Demand Employers list;
- Listed 28 times more often in *Fast Company's* Most Innovative Companies.

## Strong Brand Culture Fosters Enthusiastic Employee Ambassadors

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**When you look at the best examples of employee advocacy on social media, you see they correlate with brands known for creating extraordinary employee experiences and strong cultures.**

**Starbucks** refers to employees as partners and treats them as such with benefits like stock options, comprehensive health insurance and educational reimbursement. The brand has dedicated partner social media accounts which enjoy high levels of activity and growth.

The Starbucks Partners Facebook page has over 370,000 likes and their Twitter account has more than 50,000 followers.

**Zappos** Founder Tony Hsieh has long believed that "Your culture is your brand." Zappos has 10 core values that define its culture and that they adhere to, even turning away top performing applicants if they feel they are not a cultural fit.

Zappos is so confident in its employee engagement that they encourage reporters to speak to any employee and have a leaderboard to track which employees post the most to social media. Where this might feel like coercion in some companies, Zappos employees are happy to compete.

Zappos' Twitter account counts 2.81 million followers and its Facebook page has 2.35 million likes.

**REI's** mission is to bring quality gear to outdoor enthusiasts. The company recruits employees who share that passion. True to this mission, beginning in 2015 the company decided to close on Black Friday and to pay its 12,973 employees to spend the day outside instead.

The Black Friday campaign, code-named #OptOutside, encouraged shoppers to spend the day outside too. The campaign prompted a 7,000 percent increase in REI's social media impressions, the number of times REI related content was displayed. It also boosted sales,

memberships and employee applications.

REI's Facebook page enjoys over 1.9 million likes and its Twitter account has 409,000 followers.

## Employee Social Media Sharing is a Gift

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People have been talking about their workplaces since before the printing press was invented, let alone the internet. The good, the bad, the wow and the ugly.

Social media are in fact just relatively new platforms for people to converse the way they always have in person, over the phone and in email. The reach is further, but the conversations are the same.

Don't fault my stylist for answering my questions and sharing her unfortunate training situation with a customer.

If employees can't talk candidly about their work place, the problem is bigger than getting social media shares.

If you want your employees to be your brand's ambassadors on social media or anywhere else, **focus on engaging them with your brand by infusing your culture with an employee experience they'll want to share.**

And like Starbucks, Zappos and REI, the rewards on social media and in business performance will follow.

**P.S.** In full disclosure, I reviewed an advance copy of Denise Lee Yohn's book *Fusion* but received no compensation for that review nor will I receive anything from book link above. If you are looking for help with your company culture, it's a great read.

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