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Guerrilla Sales & Marketing

Unleashing an Army of Brand Ambassadors

LORI TURNER

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Lori Turner

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One in three small businesses uses some sort of social media, according to a recent University of Maryland study. A much smaller percentage, however, have figured out what role their employees will play in that strategy.

Whether intended or not, your employees are part of your company's social media strategy. With the growing numbers on Facebook and Twitter, and the growing number of access points (home, office, mobile phone, iPad), odds are your employees are regularly involved in social media. And since they spend more time working than engaging in any other activity, there's a high likelihood they occasionally "talk" about their job online.

So while they may not be sitting in on social media strategy meetings, they are influencing the outcome.

Giving your employees paychecks doesn't entitle you to control what they do or say in their off hours. Avoid putting a heavy-handed social media policy in place. Instead, engage your employees in a dialogue about the role social media plays in building the company brand and how they can help – in essence creating a veritable army of brand ambassadors.

There are "listening" and "speaking" roles your employees can play in your company's social media strategy through their own personal profiles on sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Just as in theater, speaking parts require more training and coaching.

Messenger – The messenger is responsible for pushing messaging out about your company, whether it be formal press releases, blog posts, newsletters, or more informal commentary on your team's current work. The mere act of talking about what you do reminds prospects and customers about your core competencies and the depth of your product and service offering. Messengers can be in primary roles, generating content, or secondary roles, reposting content produced by others.

Scout – "Listening" for commentary about your brand is the scout's role. Scouts scour social media sites looking for your company name and key words related to your business to learn about what is being said and sharing those findings with management. Scouting parameters might include your company name, the names of your management team, and your competitors' names.

Spokesperson – Anyone responsible for responding to scouted commentary is your spokesperson. And you could have several employees in this role. These employees need to be coached on the tone of your brand personality and when to escalate tricky issues.

Sales Agent – The sales agent is scanning the social media "waves" looking for prospective customers who are talking about your category. If

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PROPERTY SALES	75	216	3,483
MORTGAGES	110	269	5,905
FORECLOSURE NOTICES	0	62	3,338
BUILDING PERMITS	143	399	9,415
BANKRUPTCIES	62	208	4,695
BUSINESS LICENSES	34	138	1,707
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you run an HVAC company, for example, your sales agent would search Twitter for people in your market asking followers for a recommendation on an AC repair vendor. The agent would recommend your company and connect that person with a customer service team member.

It's critical for your company's social media presence to be authentic, so encourage employees to assume roles they feel comfortable with. Remember to acknowledge and reward employees who invest time and creativity in your company's social media strategy – possibly with an invitation to the next strategy meeting.

Lori Turner is managing partner of RedRover Sales & Marketing, www.redrovercompany.com. You can follow RedRover on Facebook and Twitter.



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