

HR Brand Evangelist: The must-have role in 2018

Silicon Valley has solved this a while back. The biggest companies have turned their Human Resources teams into PR machines. Think of the AGFA companies (Amazon, Google, Facebook, and Apple), and chances are that your employees know more stories about the AGFA companies than they do about their own employer. These digital giants have understood that if their employer brand is strong enough, the smartest people will anyway queue up to be hired. That will automatically improve the quality of hiring. If you had an HR Brand Evangelist, what a difference it could make to your search for talent.

Take Google as an example. We all know that you may get accepted at Harvard but it is ten times harder to get a job at Google. With more than two million applicants a year, Google's brand as an employer is formidable. How did they do it? They had an awesome Brand Evangelist in Eric Schmidt. He wrote books that helped us make sense of the digital shifts. And he gave talks and remained the Chairman of Google until Dec 2017. In effect, he was the public face of the brand. His book *How Google Works* HR leaders believed that he had laid bare the secrets of Google. All they had to do was to take notes and recreate the magic in their organizations. This was the closest to learning about the secret formula of Coke.



Microsoft, HP, Adobe, and many other companies have Brand Evangelists on their rolls. In some cases, the founder is a terrific Brand Evangelist. Think Richard Branson. He is almost inseparable from the Virgin brand. The holding company has a mish-mash of businesses from holiday travel to media to airlines and charities. Branson remains the Brand Evangelist who creates a unifying experience in what would be a potpourri of unrelated businesses.

What is the profile of an evangelist? My favorite pick is Guy Kawasaki. The guy is the chief evangelist of Canva, an online graphic design tool. He is a brand ambassador for Mercedes-Benz and the erstwhile evangelist for Apple. If you are on social media, you know that he is omnipresent on all channels. When he endorses a brand, it automatically reaches the millions who hang on to every word he says.



Why do you need a brand evangelist?

Take a look at websites of companies. Most of them seem to be clones of their competitors. Just replace the logo and the rest of the website would be indistinguishable. The content is full of the same few words of corporate-speak words like "vision", "disruption", "passion" etc.

HR should have Brand Evangelists simply to help in differentiating the employer brand. What does your company stand for? What makes it a unique place to work for? Who is the ideal employee you are looking for? These would be employees who have a strong individual presence as well.

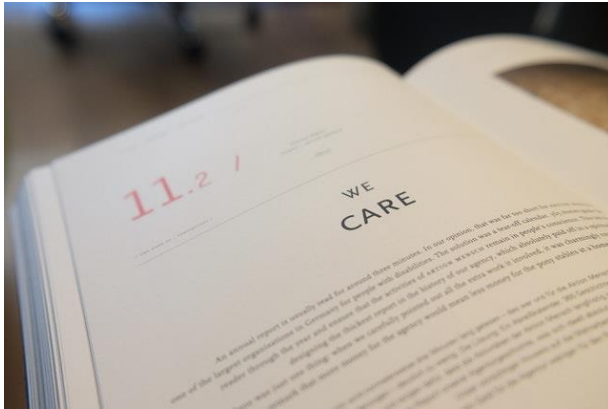
1. They understand social-media: When social media was in its infancy, most leaders dismissed it as a toy for bored teens. As more and more millennials join the workforce, the leaders find themselves unable to deal with a growing chunk of employees who don't read e-mails. The millennials spend their time on new media which has its own grammar and etiquette, making it hard for leaders to communicate. Brand Evangelists can use new media to connect with employees as well as opinion leaders outside. Vala Afshar of Salesforce has a Twitter bio that describes him as Chief Digital Evangelist @Salesforce. He blogs at Huffington Post and has more than 200,000 followers on Twitter. He (along with Marc Benioff, founder, chairman and CEO of Salesforce) turns a faceless B2B business into a human enterprise. They can be crusaders for your cause.



2. Making sense: Organizations are being forced to evolve and change shape continuously. Whether it is because of M&A activity or new products or changes in leadership or retrenchments, the company is always in the news. The Brand Evangelists help make sense of these changes. Leaders brought up in the analog world continue to believe that having a quarterly all-hands meet is enough to keep employees connected. Communication today is always, two-way, real-time and authentic. That is what Brand Evangelists are good at. They can simplify and explain why even as they answer the questions and listen to someone ranting about the new policy. Give them a sneak peek at the changes in policy and let them spread the word.

3. They listen: Every product or service has to be in perpetual beta. New features, bugs, data hacking are some of the by-products of living in a hyper-connected world. Brand Evangelists help the users stay connected and keep educating them about the need to update software or try the coolest new features. Most of all Brand Evangelists listen. Starbucks fans can submit suggestions for everything from flavors to merchandise on their My Starbucks Idea site. When did your suggestion box scheme generate as many ideas? Guy Kawasaki is the legendary evangelist for Apple. If Apple needs an evangelist, believe me having an HR Brand Evangelist could work wonders for your organization.

4. They educate: Jason Levine is an evangelist for Adobe. His tutorials make it easy for users to learn tips and tricks of the range of products that Adobe has. His tutorials on YouTube unlock mysterious features of different products. He is known to his followers as Adobe Jesus. He makes technical training so cool.



Imagine if you had someone like him to evangelize your latest L&D offering. We have no problem when companies spend big bucks marketing a soap that costs fifty rupees. But we shy away from evangelizing our training programs that could make the company stay on the cutting edge.

5. They are storytellers: Social media is changing storytelling. HR Brands have to learn how to build deep, personal, two-way connections with employees. Consumers and employees together influence pricing, packaging, platforms of engagement and even the time to market. Not engaging the employees with the same level of gusto means leaving out one important part of the brand ambassadors. Evangelists can address this gap.

Who is the ideal HR Brand Evangelist?

The best Brand Evangelists are a great mix of deep expertise of a subject plus marketing savvy. That gives them the credibility to speak about their subject with authority. Their credibility rubs off on the brand. Yes, the companies are often known by the evangelists. You may already have a few potential evangelists. These are the ones that attract the crowds in conferences. Leverage them.

In the digital world, a single tweet can destroy the reputation of a brand that has been built over years. That is when having a human face allows a brand to be forgiven. No brand evangelist can make up for a poor work culture or poor policies and leadership. Brand evangelists are storytellers. A story is the truth told in a creative way. If you have fixed all the HR processes and policies and still the employees are lukewarm in their response, go out and get yourself an HR Brand Evangelist this year.

Source : <https://tinyurl.com/ybqw6wa2>