

# Contractor Marketing


## Brand Ambassadors

### High Employee Engagement Can Be Great Marketing Tool

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(Editor's Note: Heidi J. Ellsworth, a graduate of the University of Portland, has been working in the roofing industry since 1993. Having held positions with Malarkey Roofing, Carlisle SynTec, and EcoStar® LLC, Ellsworth is best known as the founder of the roofing-focused marketing firm, HJE Marketing. She is now executive vice president of marketing for EagleView® Technology Corporation.)



itting in a recent roofing association meeting, I found myself visiting with colleagues about the importance of building ongoing relationships in the roofing industry. One woman, in particular, shared with me that recently her boss had congratulated her on significantly increasing the exposure of their company within the industry. In fact, he believed that their record-making quarter could be attributed to the emphasis they are placing on industry networking through their employees. Many companies are seeing the importance of encouraging professional involvement as a marketing benefit. Not only does it help sales and marketing but it engages employees at a stronger, more professional level that helps build the overall business.

This trend is currently being referred to as the establishment of employee brand ambassadors. Technology start-up companies have been focused on brand ambassadors for a number of years using early adopter customers. They have focused on turning their first passionate cus-

tomers into their biggest fans. These brand ambassadors spread the word about a company's products and services, in turn creating demand.

Companies are starting to realize that their best brand ambassadors are working side-by-side every day in the form of employees. The 2012 Edelman Trust Barometer, a trust and credibility survey that collects data from more than 30,000 people, found that regular rank-and-file company employees have more credibility than executives. (<http://www.edelman.com/post/building-trust-from-the-inside-out-engaging-employees-as-the-new-influencers/>)

There is a strong opportunity here for roofing companies to build not only their brand but also their high-quality reputations. It is an opportunity to let employees promote the business they believe in. The passion for what they are doing will show as they work with their local and professional organizations.

How can a management team encourage employees to become brand ambassadors?

- 1 It starts with asking for their opinion. Don't just ask them to promote the business but ask for their feedback on what they believe are the company's strongest assets and where there may be room for improvement.
- 2 Create channels of communication. Be sure your employees know what is going on within the company. Take the time to educate and get them excited about new products, projects, or services that make your company distinctive.
- 3 Encourage social media interaction and advocacy. This is an area that is still hard for many companies. Is the employee engaged or just scrolling through Facebook? In this day and

age, it is both. Employees live their lives at work and at home. They are liking posts, commenting on new information, and making referrals.

4 Allow employees to help strengthen customer relationships. Every positive meeting is a great sales and marketing opportunity for the company. Whether it is accounting, production, sales, or the front desk, employees should leave the customer smiling and happy.

5 Financially and emotionally encourage involvement. Help employees be involved in professional and community associations. Having employees attend Chamber of Commerce events, sponsoring school sports, or helping with community service projects gives them the time to advocate for their place of work while being involved.

6 Make sharing easy. Help employees share this information with each other and your customers. Monthly lunch and learns that share how to be a brand ambassador, social media discussion groups, and company newsletters are all ways to engage and educate employees.

7 Make sure every employee is enabled to be a brand ambassador. From the rooftop to the front desk, every employee should be able to talk about the mission and differentiating qualities of the company. Why is this the best roofing and exterior contracting company? What is offered that is different? By asking these questions and taking the time to train employees on the company's marketing materials and messaging it will reap great rewards.

As you use these steps to create brand ambassadors in your company, be sure to look across the board for opportunities not just locally, but also regionally and nationally.

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