

Smart guide

6 simple ways to use social media to engage employees

Create community and help employees work more efficiently





Help internal social media reach its potential

Today many organizations—big and small—are using social media to reach and engage employees.

Why? Outside the workplace, social media has become increasingly important to the way employees live. It's how they stay connected to others, share ideas and get the information they need. So, it's natural to use social media as an employee communication tool.

However, internal social media still faces one big obstacle: employees often don't see much value in social media, perceiving it as “something else to do” rather than as a useful work tool.

So, how can you help employees recognize the value of social media? This Smart guide will help you choose the right social media tool and encourage employee participation.



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The best part of social media? Its potential to help employees to connect, share ideas and solve problems.

Help internal social media reach its potential (continued)

To get started, know your employees

The most effective social media programs focus on employee needs, not the technology. To determine needs:

- ✓ Learn employees' demographics to understand their communication preferences.
- ✓ Ask employees what social media they use at home.
- ✓ Understand how employees do their jobs and introduce social media tools that support their work.
- ✓ Conduct focus groups. Ask: "Based on your personal experiences, how can we use social media inside the company?"
- ✓ Interview employees to understand your company's collaboration DNA.

The more you know about employee preferences, the better you can promote the benefits of social media.



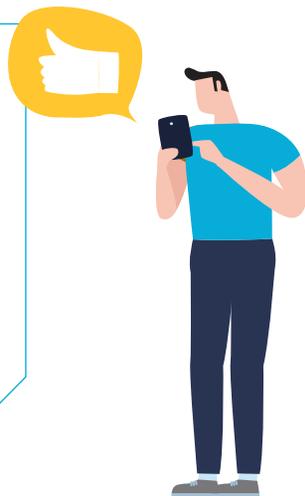
Social media isn't just for college students and teenagers. Every generational cohort—from ages 18 to 64—reads or views content online.

Test your knowledge

Q How much time do Americans spend on social media sites each day?

- a. 1.5 hours
- b. 2.5 hours
- c. 3.5 hours
- d. 4.5 hours

[Click here for answer](#)



1

Use the right tool for the job

Have you considered using social media for employee communications, but you're not sure which tool will get the most traction?

Try giving employees what they prefer. Use surveys or polls to determine the most popular social media outlet among colleagues, then adopt a similar tool.

Here's how to get started:

If your employees do this at home...	...then try using this tool at the office	Here's how:
Social networking	Internal colleague network	Build a social network on your intranet where employees can input profile information, "friend" colleagues and post comments on each others' profile pages.
Posting quick, short status updates	Twitter-style platform	Use a microblog to update colleagues on daily workloads, seek out or offer help on projects, post links to inspirational articles or spread the word about cookies in the kitchen.
Collecting content	Widgets for rating or tagging content	Add buttons to your intranet that let employees rate articles, blogs and columns on a five-star scale. Allow users to tag pages with keywords and help improve your search capabilities.
Watching videos for entertainment	Video channel	Reach out to employees by creating a YouTube channel for leader videos, training sessions and news. Let employees post their own videos and respond to each others' videos.



Nearly three out of four companies use social media tools, such as Yammer and Slack, to support employee communication.*

*2018 McKinsey Global Institute



2 Promote adoption

If you build it (a new social media platform), you can't assume that they (employees) will come. Busy, distracted employees won't necessarily become instant adopters of your social media effort, no matter how well designed your program may be.

That's why you need to invest in a change communication effort to: A) inform about your cool new tools, B) build belief about their value and C) provide help on how to use the platform.

To encourage employees to use social media, follow these 8 steps:

<p>1 Snack and chat Create a break room where employees can grab a free snack and have an online conversation.</p>	<p>5 Overcome the obstacles Ask employees why they aren't using social media and share the answers.</p>
<p>2 Emphasize the benefits Quick collaboration, easy knowledge sharing, being in the know.</p>	<p>6 Make it an event Have a social media post-a-thon. The more employee participation, the better.</p>
<p>3 Use success stories Highlight employees who use social media to work smarter and more efficiently.</p>	<p>7 Have fun Run a contest and give out small prizes to celebrate employee participation.</p>
<p>4 Reach out and touch someone Ask employees to send out hellos to co-workers they don't know.</p>	<p>8 Buddy up Recruit social media ambassadors to answer questions and encourage use.</p>



Experiment to build adoption

- ✓ Introduce social media gradually to employees.
- ✓ Engage groups of employees in trials of social media channels.
- ✓ Understand what works today may need to change tomorrow.
- ✓ Start small. Set up a test group.
- ✓ Create a pilot. Ask participants to share their experiences.



3

Teach nervous users “how to”

Just because you’re fabulous at Facebook, a pro at Pinterest and a terrific Tweeter doesn’t mean that everyone in your organization is equally adept.

It’s likely that a portion of your employees are Baby Boomers who grew up using typewriters and telephones, not tablets and mobile devices, and may approach new technologies with caution.

Although Baby Boomers may need extra help when it comes to social media, everyone could use a little advice. You don’t want “I don’t know how” or “It’s too hard” to be barriers to adoption. Make sure to include plenty of “how to” in your communication.



Test your knowledge

- Q** What is the most popular social media tool?
- a. Twitter
 - b. Facebook
 - c. LinkedIn
 - d. YouTube

[Click here for answer](#)



Help employees get comfortable by:

- ✓ **Hosting webinars for workers who aren’t digital natives.** Cover the basics. Debunk misconceptions.
- ✓ **Helping newbies by holding a web chat** to introduce them to useful company contacts.
- ✓ **Creating step-by-step video tutorials** that offer easy-to-follow, visually appealing instruction.
- ✓ **Developing a two-hour or half-day boot camp,** providing intensive training for those who need it.
- ✓ **Considering users’ diverse learning needs;** offer quick tips, tutorials, FAQs and training.

Employees are more likely to use social media when they know how to use it effectively.

4

Invite employees to create content

It's a challenge to keep your communication fresh and interesting, especially when budgets are tight and staff is stretched. Why not make the transition from creating all the content yourself to letting employees contribute? You'll reduce your workload, make your site more engaging and use social media in a productive, participative way.

Here are 4 ways to build employee-generated content on your site:

- 1 Launch a quick poll.** You can post a new question each week, such as "How do you overcome presentation jitters?", with multiple-choice responses.
- 2 Post recommendations.** Allow people to recommend websites, videos, software or training classes that helped them learn or solve a problem at work.
- 3 Create an event slideshow.** Nearly everyone has a camera or phone that takes photos. Ask people to submit photos of events, such as company meetings. Create a slideshow with captions.
- 4 Post videos.** You can invite co-workers to create three- to four-minute videos around a theme, such as "How my team promotes innovation."



5 photo-sharing ideas

To encourage employee participation, here are some ideas:

Recognize a co-worker. Submit a photo of a colleague who's working to achieve your company goals. Include a caption that's 25 words or less.

Share what you learned. Take a photo at a conference or a seminar. Tell employees three things you learned.

Post an interesting idea. Share a photo depicting an idea you have for increasing efficiency or saving costs.

Make meetings more productive. What suggestions do you have for improving meetings? Take a photo of your concept.

Show us where you work. Submit a photo of your office or facility from an unusual angle or perspective.



5

Stimulate collaboration

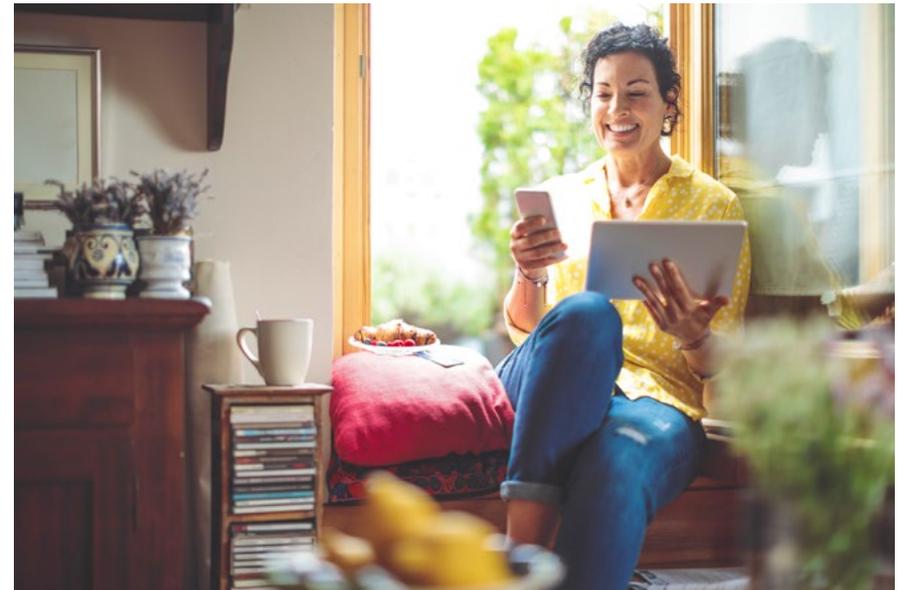
Not so long ago, going to work meant showing up every day at a central office or facility where it was easy to collaborate with your boss and colleagues. However, an increasing number of employees don't work at headquarters but from a remote or satellite location or even from home.

The challenge is to keep employees feeling connected—to managers, peers and the organization—despite physical distance and lack of face-to-face contact. Luckily, there's a perfect tool for the job: social media.

Test your knowledge

- Q** What percentage of Americans age 50–64 use social media?
- a. 34%
 - b. 54%
 - c. 64%
 - d. 84%

[Click here for answer](#)



Options like Twitter and social networking sites:

- ✓ **Help employees better understand** the company's goals, values and strategy
- ✓ **Give managers easy ways to stay connected** with their team members
- ✓ Increase the visibility and accessibility of **senior leaders**
- ✓ **Allow employees to share ideas** and help each other solve problems
- ✓ **Create ample opportunities** for feedback and two-way communication

With more employees working remotely, social media can help create powerful connections.

Stimulate collaboration (continued)

How to create collaboration? Here are 5 suggestions:

- 1. Create a place to brainstorm.** Create a microsite where employees can ask questions and get ideas.
- 2. Build networks to connect employees.** Consider discussion boards that let employees share thoughts about a topic.
- 3. Host an internal conference.** Create a platform for participants to share highlights with colleagues.
- 4. Make social media matter.** Host a discussion to gather ideas for a business problem.
- 5. Help employees set up groups.** Allow colleagues to collaborate and connect with others.



Evidence that social media improves productivity

Leaders worry that social media will encourage employees to waste time. But according to researchers at the McKinsey Global Institute, social media has the potential to raise productivity.

The problem is that today, managers, professionals and sales people spend 28% of their work days answering, writing or responding to email, 19% trying to track down information and 14% collaborating with co-workers.

According to researchers, communicating and collaborating via social technology would increase the efficiency of workers doing these activities by 25%.

6

Make it easy for leaders to jump in

Despite the promise of social media, it will not be successful unless senior leaders participate. Yet leaders barely have time to manage their current communication responsibilities, much less add another task to their list.

The good news is that even the most time-pressed leader can have a presence on social media. These social media platforms are not only fast, they're also easier to complete. Got your timer ready? Let's go!

30 seconds

Encourage leaders to “tweet” (create very short updates) on your internal Twitter-like platform. Answer these questions: “What am I working on?” or “What’s my thought about this topic?” in about 140 characters.

Test your knowledge

- Q** What are the average tweets per day on Twitter?
- a. 50 million
 - b. 100 million
 - c. 250 million
 - d. 500 million

[Click here for answer](#)

Two minutes

Writing can be hard, especially for perfectionist leaders. **Say it with pictures.** Encourage your leader to use his/her smartphone to take informal photos of what he/she is observing, especially at events. Create a process for the leader to post the photo with a caption.

Five minutes

Blogs were a popular trend a few years ago, but long essays take a lot of work to write—and a lot of time to read. **Suggest a microblog, written observations in 50 words or less.** Microblogs are not as restrictive as tweets, but are easier and more time efficient than old-style blogs.



30 minutes

Give leaders a YouTube style video experience. Schedule a 30-minute video shoot, and ask the leader a series of questions. Edit each snippet into a 30- to 60-second segment, and post one a week.

One hour

Schedule a one-hour Q&A chat during which a leader answers employee questions. The session is immediate, it's in real time and it feels authentic. Plus, when the hour is over, the leader can check it off his/her list.



Make it easy for leaders to jump in (continued)

Get buy-in for employee social media

Social media is a great way to engage employees, connect remote workers and encourage collaboration. It can be tricky to get buy-in, when leaders have concerns like: Social media will reduce productivity; we run the risk of someone sharing confidential information; or what happens if an employee violates our policies—or even breaks the law?

To find out how to make the case for social media and gain support from senior leaders, we used our internal Yammer network to solicit ideas from our Davis & Company colleagues. Here's what they suggested:

Know the facts

- Research external studies and use data to show how leading companies use social media to build employee engagement.
- Conduct focus groups to understand employees' social media needs. The most effective programs concentrate on the employee, so demonstrate how your proposed approach will solve a workplace need.

Create a controlled experience

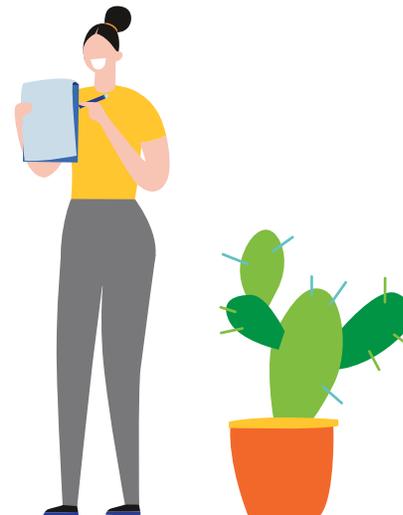
Senior leaders are often nervous because social media seems so open-ended. Once it's launched, it runs 24/7. Ask a leader to host a one-hour live chat. Here's how it works: The leader posts a topic, employees ask questions and the leader responds.

Pilot an initiative

Once you've practiced using one-hour increments, expand your efforts by developing a pilot. Start small; take baby steps toward your goal. By introducing social media in one group, location or function, you can test your program before introducing it broadly. Report on results to show senior leadership that social media can, indeed, work here.

There's a policy for that

- ✓ To avoid inappropriate postings, **develop social media guidelines.**
- ✓ **Manage expectations.** To be successful, employees need clear direction.
- ✓ The simplest, clearest social media guideline: **What will get you fired offline will get you fired online.**
- ✓ Effective guidelines should **encourage social media.** Example: 59% of media companies ask employees to tweet.
- ✓ **Suggest how much time employees should spend on social media.** Be specific: How much is ideal?



Answers

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b. As of 2018, Americans spend an average of 2 hours and 22 minutes per day on social networks and messaging.
Source: globalwebindex
[Go back](#)

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d. Although Facebook remains the dominant social platform by membership, it falls behind YouTube in terms of weekly visitors.
Source: globalwebindex
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c. Social media use among people ages 50 and older continues to rise: today 64% of those 50–64 and 66% of those over the age of 65 use at least one social media platform.
Source: Pew Research Center
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d. Over 335 million active Twitter users generate over 500 million tweets a day.
Source: Live Internet Stats
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The leaders in internal communication

We're Davis & Company, the employee communication experts. Since 1984, leading organizations have depended on us to reach, engage and motivate their employees. Our strategic mindset, creative spirit and practical know-how can solve your toughest communication challenges. Give us a call. We'd love to help.

To schedule a consultation, contact [Vaishali Benner](#) or call 1-877-399-5100.

Take social media to the next level

We can help you to:

- Define your internal communication objectives
- Choose the right social media tool for your team
- Get buy-in from senior leaders
- Create an engagement plan to promote participation

5 things to know about us



Global. We've created communication programs that reach employees across the world, in nearly every continent (but not, we admit, Antarctica).



Experienced. We have decades of experience in communicating change, initiatives, HR programs and policies, and many other topics.



Collaborative. Our favorite way of working is to meet with our clients and put our heads together.



Client-focused. Our mission is to help you solve your problems. To set you up for success. To make sure you get the recognition you deserve. (We think you get the picture.)



Acclaimed. We've won hundreds of awards and routinely earn the praise of clients and colleagues.