

THE UKRAINIAN ARMY IS LEVERAGING ONLINE INFLUENCERS. CAN THE U.S. MILITARY?

TODD C. HELMUS
COMMENTARY

MARCH 1, 2023



Todd C. Helmus

June 6, 2023



Ukraine's success on the information battlefield

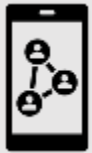


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Citizens & soldiers have taken directly to social media

FOCUS OF THIS BRIEF



Ukraine's use of social media



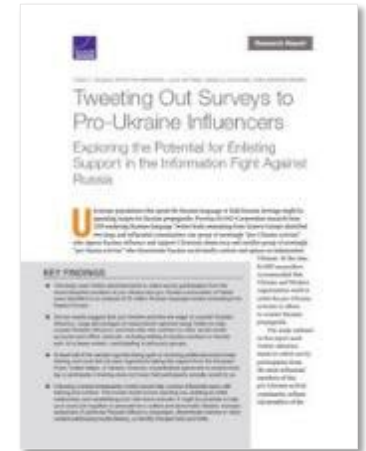
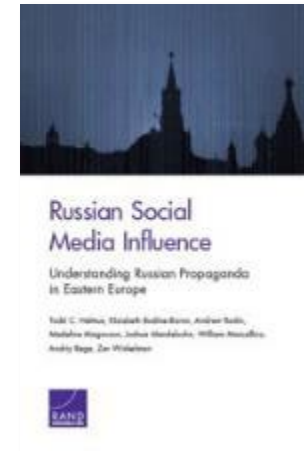
Lessons from the private sector



Policy implications for the U.S. military

Ukraine (2018) was ground zero for a citizen-led information war

Surveys reveal that many influential Russian language Twitter users are eager to counter Russian propaganda



Private social media posts/accounts play an influential role





Lesia Vasylenko
@leslavasylenko

#Russia destroyed Her school by a bombing on 27 February. She still got to wear her graduation dress. Just in a very different setting from what she could ever imagine. #Kharkiv



11:34 AM · Jun 7, 2022

1,232 Retweets 91 Quotes 7,128 Likes 39 Bookmarks





Oleksiy Sorokin
@mrsorokaa

...

A violoncellist performs in downtown Kharkiv, destroyed by Russia.

Video: [@suspline](#)



From **Olga Tokariuk**

4:20 PM · Mar 22, 2022 from Ukraine

4,369 Retweets 359 Quotes 13.7K Likes 339 Bookmarks





INDEPENDENT



Kriegsforscher
@OSINTua

One year ago they thought that they would break us. They expected an easy victory. That we will surrender because we are fighting against one of the biggest army.

The war continues. We didn't surrender and never do it. And we won't allow our enemy to walk on Ukrainian ground.



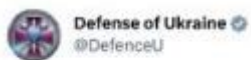
0:05 112.2K views

9:02 AM · Feb 24, 2023 · 274.1K Views

323 Retweets · 13 Quotes · 4,378 Likes · 60 Bookmarks







Defense of Ukraine ✓
@DefenceU

Artillerymen of the 17th tank brigade of the #UAarmy have opened the holiday season for ruscists. Some bathed in the Siverskyi Donets River, and some were burned by the May sun.



1:19 PM · May 11, 2022

1,756 Retweets 228 Quotes 14.1K Likes 145 Bookmarks



Максим ✓
@kms_d4k

What I did to destroy Russian pontonne bridge over Siverskyi Donets - a thread 📖

Here you go -> -> ->

5:45 PM · May 11, 2022



9,919 Retweets 2,256 Quotes 44.7K Likes 3,364 Bookmarks





INFLUENCER
MARKETING

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Commercial influencer tactics

Online influencers

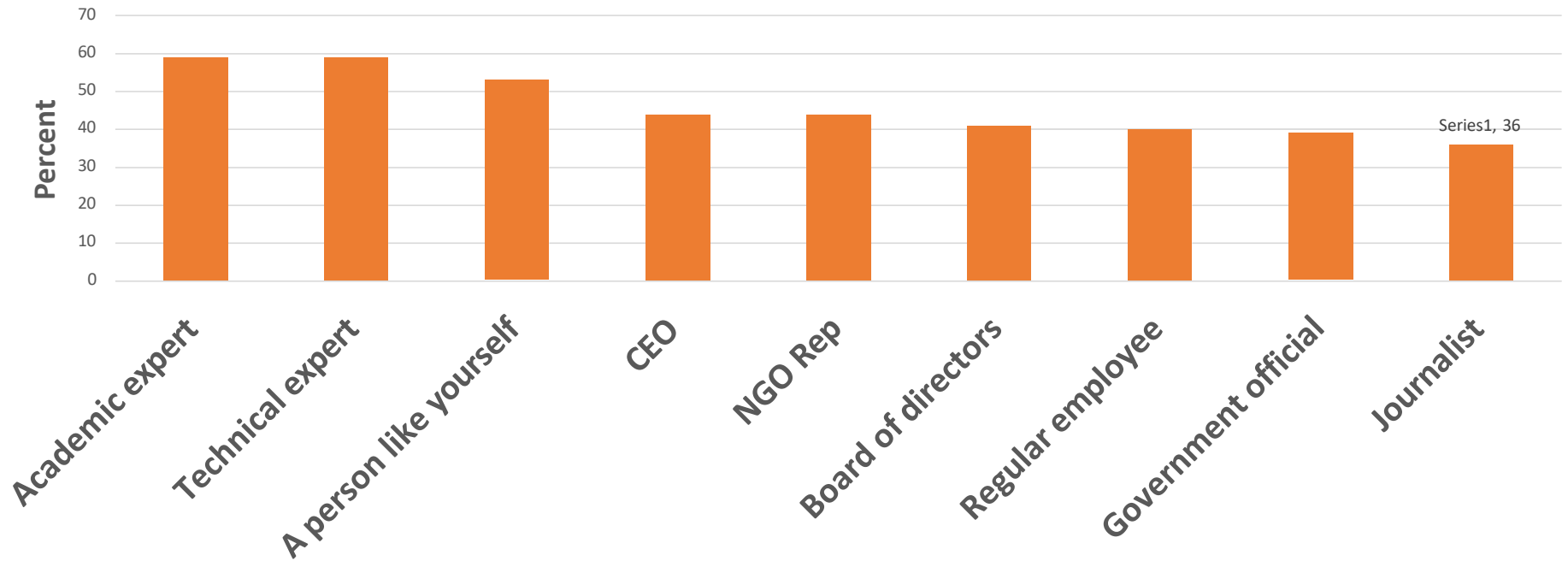
Brand Ambassadors

**Customer word of
mouth**

**Employee Advocate
programs**



“When forming an opinion about a company, if you heard information about a company from each person, how credible would the information be...”



The most credible form of advertising comes straight from the people we know and trust.

Marketers in the US are likely to spend \$3.7 billion this year on influencers. However, it seems that consumers are more inclined to turn to everyday social media users for product recommendations.

Employee Advocacy





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Encourages authenticity and credibility

Incentivizes participation

Provides access to sharable information

Offers education and training

Formally inducts employees into program

Common
influencer
tactics



Adobe

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Employee advocate programs help increase online reach and help recruit new workforce talent

FORBES > LEADERSHIP > ENTREPRENEURS

The Key To Increasing Your Brand's Reach By 561%? Your Employees.

Ryan Erskine Former Contributor 

I write about digital branding and online reputation management.

Jun 30, 2018, 10:15pm EDT

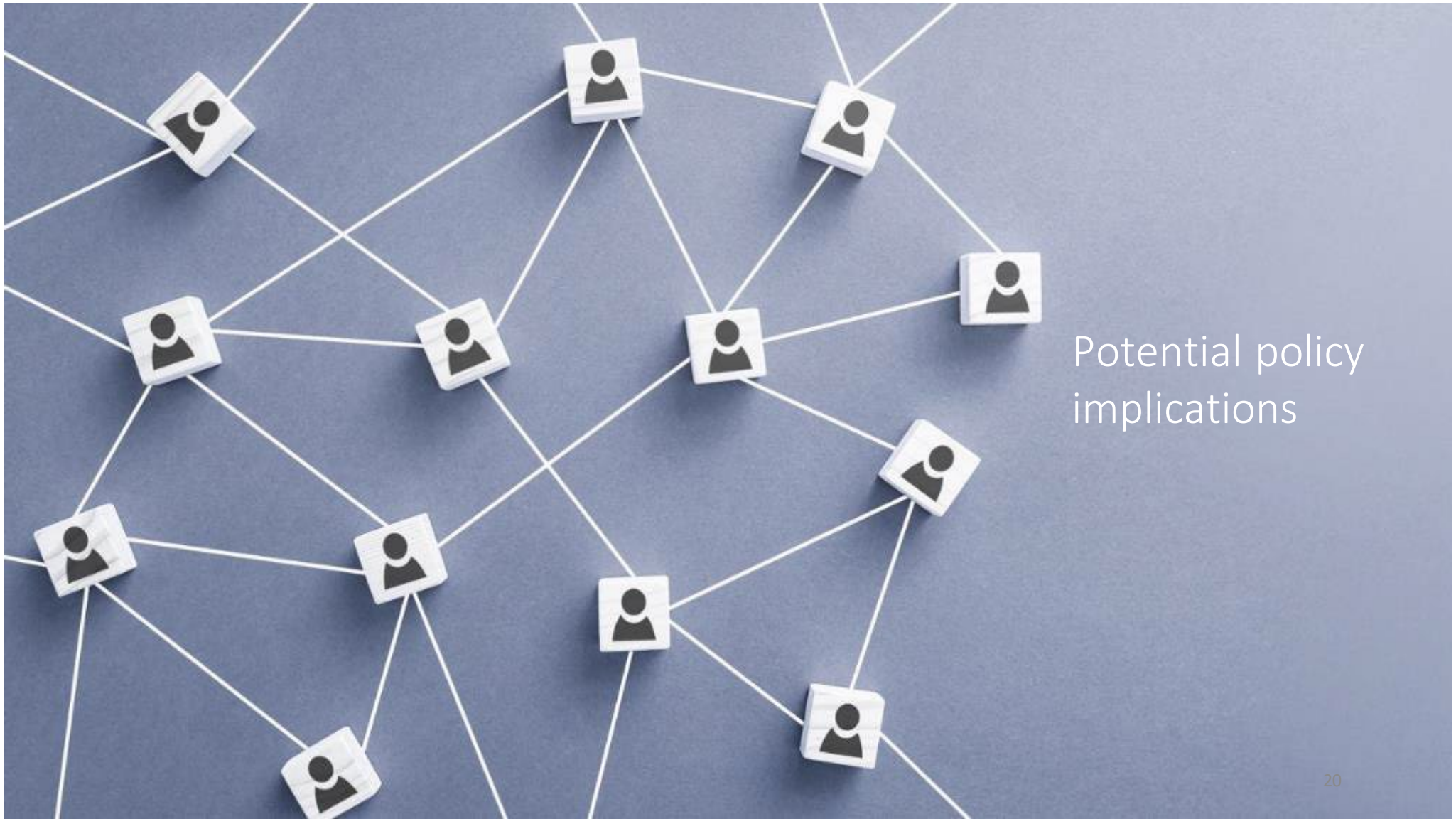
TWEET THIS



The power of employee advocacy is directly equal to the authenticity of its execution.



The power of employee advocacy is directly equal to the authenticity of its execution.



Potential policy implications

The U.S.
Military could
work with local
influencers

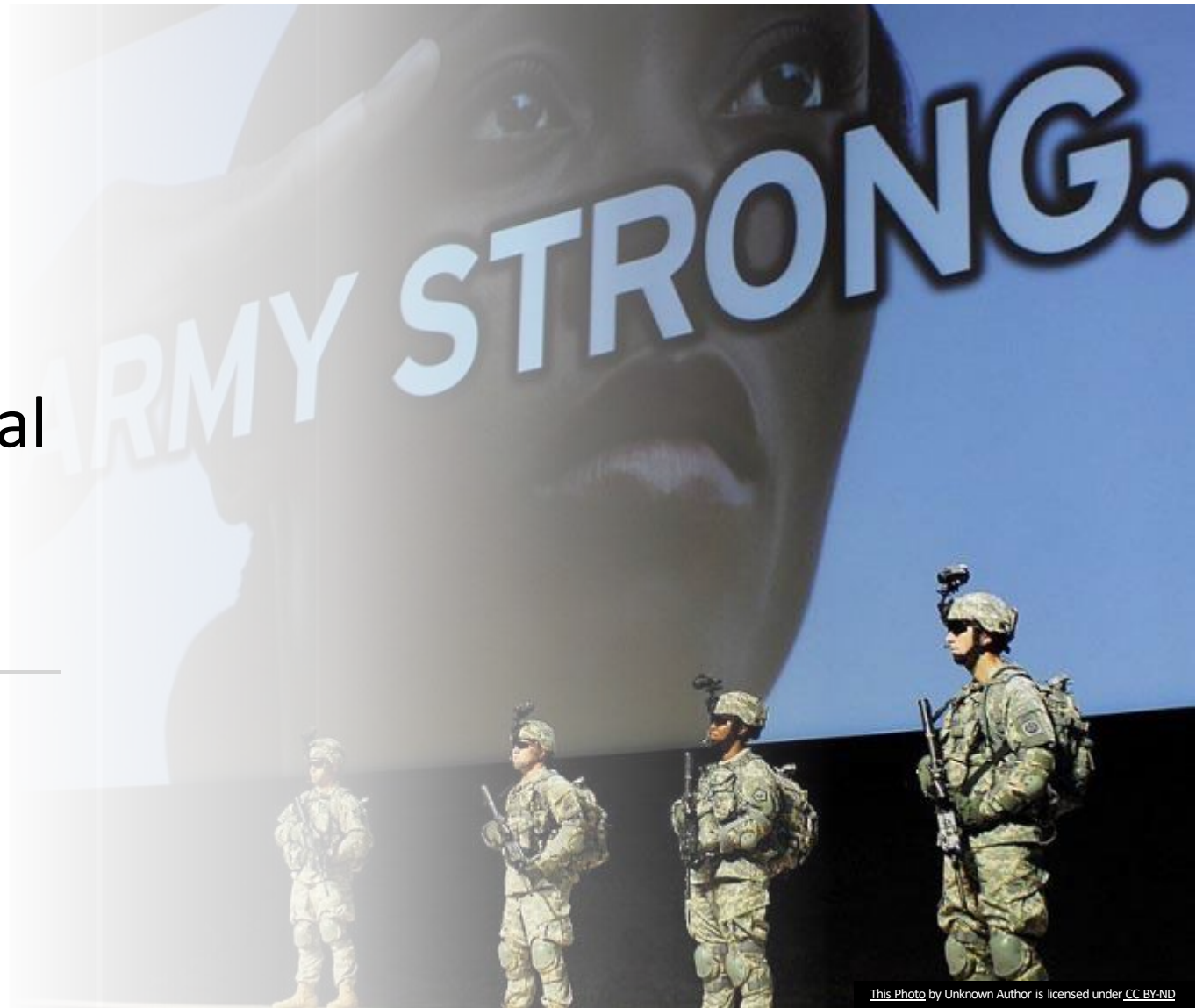


The U.S. military
could adopt
employee advocate
programs



—

Encouraging social media use could help recruitment



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-ND](#)



And it could help improve U.S. messaging during operations




This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)



PLEASE DESTROY CELL
PHONES BEFORE ENTERING

Some perceive the US military
does not encourage social
media use



Key limitations of social
media use in the military

SOME HOW



The image shows a book cover with a light-colored, textured background. The title 'RULES of ENGAGEMENT' is printed in a dark, serif font. 'RULES' is in large, bold letters at the top, followed by a decorative horizontal line with three small circles in the center. Below this line, the words 'of ENGAGEMENT' are printed in a smaller font. The book is set against a dark, wood-grain background.

RULES of ENGAGEMENT

Rules of engagement can help mitigate risks of social media use

What might a military employee advocate program look like?





**Authenticity:
A final
observation**

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