



Beekeeper  
Group

# **The Advocacy Funnel Has Shifted: Why Your Social Media Strategy Needs to Catch Up**

May 2026



# Introduction

If you caught our [Future of Advocacy Report](#) earlier this year, you already know that the data had a lot to say about how people respond to advocacy asks, which channels drive action, and what happens after someone decides to get involved.

For us, that research did more than confirm what we were seeing in the field. It opened up a broader conversation we had been circling for a while: what is actually happening with organic social media, and why does it feel like the old playbook is not working the way it used to?

We hear versions of the same questions from organizations across the advocacy space. Why has engagement dropped on our Facebook page? Why are we putting so much into our content calendar and seeing so little in return? What is the right cadence? What does best practice even look like right now? These are not small questions, and they are not unique to any one organization or issue area. They reflect something larger that has been shifting underneath all of us.

Social media was built on the social graph, connecting you to people you know and pages you follow. It now runs on the interest graph, surfacing content based on what the algorithm predicts you want to see.

This white paper synthesizes an assumption we have suspected for a few years and can now support with data. The organic social media funnel has inverted. The assumptions most organizations are still operating on, about what social is for, where it sits in the funnel, and what it can reasonably be asked to do, have not kept pace with how people actually move through an advocacy journey today. That misalignment is not a content problem or a resource problem. It is a strategy problem, and it is costing organizations significant time and energy that is not activating anyone.

In the next pages, we share what the data is telling us, how we see the funnel having shifted, and the role of organic social media pages and communities in 2026 and beyond.

Social media was built on the **social graph**, connecting you to people you know and pages you follow. It now runs on the **interest graph**, surfacing content based on what the algorithm predicts you want to see.

## What the data shows

Our data<sup>1</sup> makes one thing clear: direct channels drive action. Personal asks, emails, and texts consistently outperform every other channel when it comes to driving action.

What happens next is equally important. Eighty percent of people who take action go on to research the issue further. They search Google first, then land on your organization's website, and then find your social channels. **In fact, 41% go directly to the organization's website and 34% turn to social media as part of that research journey. That post-action sequence is where organic social media earns its place in the funnel, not as the spark that starts the fire,** but as the credibility and community layer that keeps people engaged after they have already decided to act.

## The funnel has inverted

If the advocate journey starts after someone has already acted, what role has your social media content actually been playing?

Organizations built a presence on social media, grew a following, and used that platform to move people from awareness to education to action to sustained engagement. That sequence felt logical because the platforms were designed to support it. Social media ran on the social graph, meaning your content reached the people who had chosen to follow you. The assumption was that the entire journey, from the moment someone first heard of your organization or issue to the moment they took action, could be built and maintained on social. Organic reach was real and reliable.

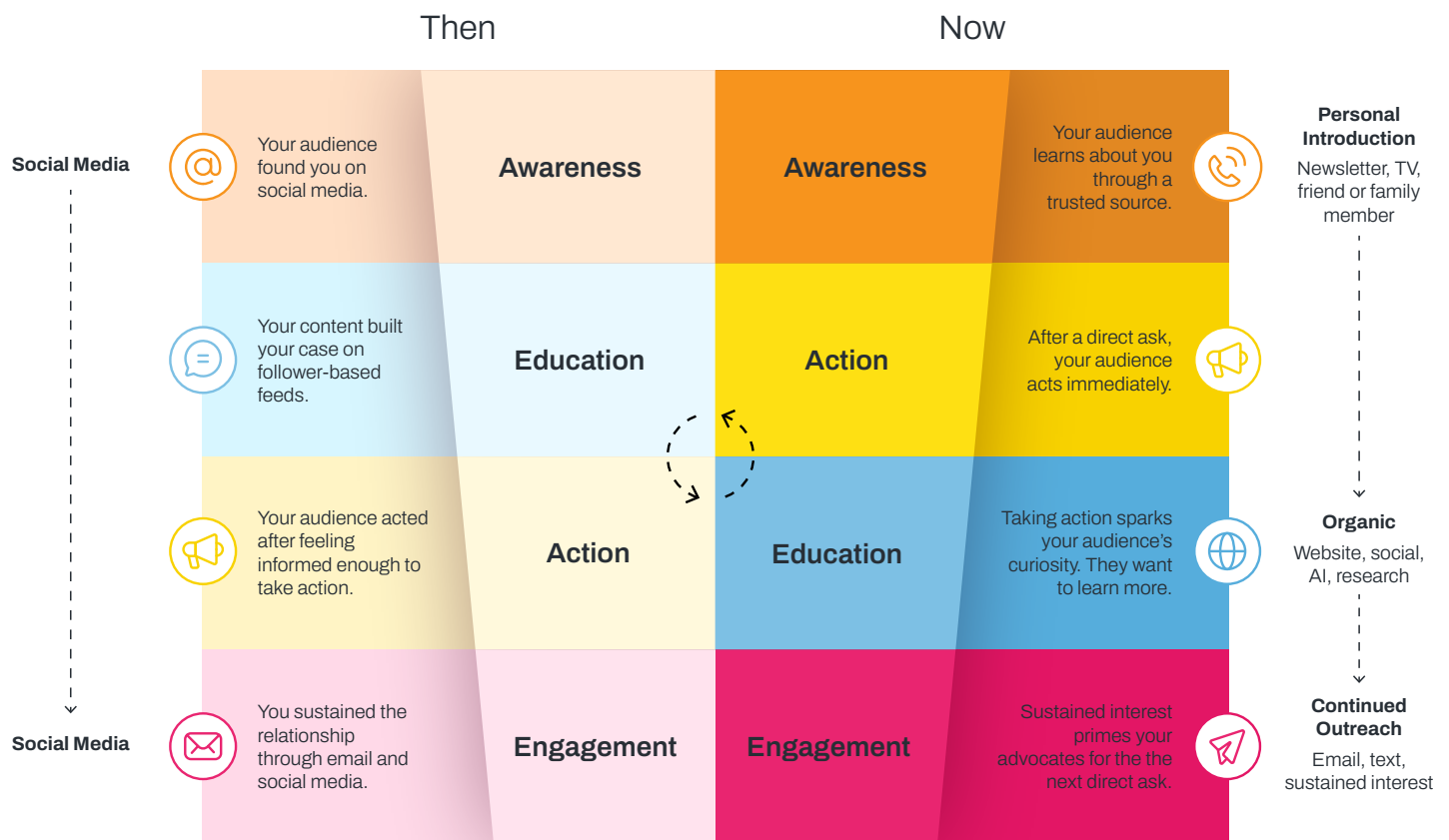
The funnel did not break because organizations stopped producing good content. It broke because the platform stopped delivering it.

Then the platforms changed. Not the content formats, not the aesthetics, but the underlying architecture. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and others made a deliberate decision to shift from the social graph to the interest graph, prioritizing content based on predicted engagement rather than existing relationships. The business logic was clear: interest-based feeds drive more time on platform, which drives more ad revenue. For organizations, it meant that the audience they had spent years building was no longer reliably seeing what they posted.

The funnel did not break because organizations stopped producing good content. It broke because the platform stopped delivering it.

What the data now reflects is a sequence that looks quite different. Awareness still exists at the top of the funnel, but it no longer comes primarily from social media. People become aware of issues and organizations through personal connection, a friend or family member who cares, an email newsletter they already trust, or a news story they caught on TV. That awareness creates the conditions for a direct ask to land.

The ask, through email, text, or a personal conversation, is what moves someone to act. Action then triggers the education and research journey that used to come first. People search Google, visit your website, and find your social channels to verify that the organization is credible and the issue is real. Ongoing engagement is not built on social either. It is sustained by the next direct ask and by the person's continued connection to the issue itself.



Social media is where people land after they have already decided to get involved, not where they go to decide.

## What this means for your organization's page

Understanding where social media sits in the funnel changes how you should think about your organization's page, not as an activation tool, but as infrastructure that supports the journey your advocates are already on.

When someone receives a direct ask and responds, they are going to look you up. Your social presence is one of the first places they land, and what they find there either builds confidence in your organization or raises questions about it. That is the job your page is actually doing, and it is worth building for intentionally. This does not mean that the content you produce needs to change dramatically. It means the intention behind it shifts. Content optimized to serve someone already in motion will look different from content chasing the algorithm, and it will perform better for the audience that actually matters most to your organization.

**Credibility infrastructure.** Your page needs to look active, credible, and consistent. Not because posting volume drives action, but because a dormant or sparse page raises questions for someone who is already interested and trying to decide whether your organization is worth their continued attention. You are not trying to convert a stranger. You are trying to reassure someone who is already leaning in.

That audience is no longer just human. AI tools are increasingly pulling from social media to answer questions about organizations and issues, which means the quality and consistency of what you publish contributes to how your organization is represented when someone turns to an AI assistant to learn more about your cause.

**Issue education.** The content that serves your audience best is content that answers their questions, deepens their understanding of the issues you are working on, and connects your work to the things they already care about. Think of your social page as the place where someone who just took action on your campaign can go to learn more, not as the place where you launch the campaign.

**Community signaling.** People want to feel like they are part of something. An active, engaged social presence, one where real people are commenting, sharing, and showing up, signals that your issue has a community behind it. That social proof matters, not as a conversion mechanism, but as a reason to stay involved.

# Where social still moves the needle

Social media can still be a powerful conversion channel. But it is not with organic content. Two approaches continue to drive real results and point to the same underlying principle: precision beats volume every time.

## **Paid social**

Targeted paid social, done well, can perform much closer to a direct channel than anything organic content can achieve on its own. When you use paid placement to reach a specific audience on a specific issue, you are no longer at the mercy of the algorithm. You are delivering something that feels personally relevant to the person receiving it, which is exactly what the data tells us drives action.

Organizations are finding success through geo-targeted campaigns that put state and local issues in front of the people most directly affected, and retargeting audiences they have already built relationships with through email and text.

## **Influencer partnerships**

The distinction that matters in influencer strategy is not follower count. It is trust. A macro influencer with a national audience can generate significant awareness, but awareness is not action. What moves people is a recommendation that feels like it is coming from someone who shares their community, their values, or their lived experience.

Micro influencers and local community voices consistently outperform their larger counterparts in advocacy contexts because their audiences are self-selected and highly engaged. When the right voice speaks to the right community about an issue that directly affects them, it functions much closer to a personal ask than a social post. That is the sweet spot worth investing in.

# Recommendation: Refocus, reinvest, remeasure

The advocacy landscape has always rewarded organizations that adapt to where their audiences are and how they move. What the data now makes clear is that audiences have shifted, not away from social media, but through it differently. Organic social now sits in the middle of the advocacy funnel rather than the top, and the organizations best positioned are the ones willing to right-size its role. The good news is that most organizations already have the ingredients. The shift is in how you sequence and frame what you are already producing.

## **Refocus your content around the post-action journey**

Consider what happens after someone takes action on your issue. That post-action audience has real intent, and most content strategies are not explicitly built to serve them. This is an opportunity, not a gap. Organizations that build content to answer questions, deepen understanding, and reflect an active

community will find that their social presence becomes a retention and deepening tool rather than a top-of-funnel broadcast. That is a more sustainable use of your team's production and review time, and it is one your leadership can measure in ways that go beyond reach and impressions.

## Reinvest in the channels that activate

Direct channels consistently outperform social posts when it comes to driving action. That gap is not a content quality problem. It is a channel reality, and it points to a clear opportunity for organizations willing to look honestly at where their time and budget are actually going. Reinvesting in your email program, your text outreach, and the peer-to-peer infrastructure that makes personal asks scalable does not mean walking away from social. It means making sure the channel doing the activation work is getting the same strategic attention as the channel everyone can see.

## Remeasure what success looks like

Impressions and follower growth tell you about reach. They do not tell you whether your page is doing its job for the person who arrived from a search, saw your email call to action, or is deciding whether your organization is worth their continued attention. Forward-thinking teams are starting to ask a different set of questions: Does this content serve someone already in motion? Would a first-time visitor who just took action on our issue find what they need here? Does our page reflect the credibility and community we are trying to build? Adding that lens alongside your existing metrics does not require overhauling your reporting. It requires a small but meaningful shift in what you are optimizing for, and it gives you a much stronger story to tell internally about the strategic value of your social program.

## The TL;DR

The platforms have changed. The content formats have changed. But for most advocacy organizations, the playbook has not kept pace. The old playbook worked because the platforms supported it. Organizations built real audiences, real followings, and real communities on social media, and that work was not wasted. What the data is telling us now is that those communities are still there and are still valuable. They are just not where the activation happens anymore.

The funnel has inverted, and that is actually good news. It means the path to more effective advocacy is not about doing more. It is about doing the right things in the right order. Activate through direct channels, let social do its job as the credibility and education layer it has become, and measure your organization's page by the audience that matters most: the advocate who just said yes and is looking for a reason to stay.

## Source

1. Beekeeper Group. (2025, December). *The Future of Advocacy Research Survey*.