

The Employer Brand Playbook

"A word is a word, and a picture is worth a thousand... but a brand is worth a million."

Tony Hsieh

A Brief Introduction

Finding the right people is a daunting enough task. As a recruiter, you know that your organization's long-term success depends on hiring candidates who are not just highly qualified, but well-suited to your company culture--but what is it that attracts top talent to a company in the first place?

More importantly, what causes businesses to struggle and fail at finding strong culture fits for their organizations? The answer to both questions is the same: employer branding.

A strong employer brand is a complex mechanism, consisting of multiple elements, from company culture (mission, vision, and core values) to candidate experience and employee engagement, to name just a few. It's a rich story you tell employees and candidates alike about your business and its unique place in the market.

To put it more concretely, your employer brand is your company's perceived image and reputation as a place to work--your organization's corporate identity filtered through employee experience.

Many business don't place enough value on creating and promoting a strong employer brand. As a result, when company's can't find and retain top quality hires, a weak employer brand is one of the most likely culprits.

The facts listed above are just some of the reasons we felt that employer branding deserved its own eBook. Here are a few others:

- Employer branding is an excellent way to define and promote the kind of value you have to offer future employees.
- It will help you differentiate yourself from other organizations competing for the same talent.

- Your organization's chances of attracting talented job seekers and retaining valuable employees will increase.
- You'll control the online conversation about your brand.

"If there is a lack of communication, people fill in the blanks."

Peggy Frazier VP Global Talent
Acquisition, Blackbaud (Formerly Microsoft & Apple)

Perhaps the most important fact about employer brand, however, is that your ability to build an all-star team and retain top talent depends on it. In such a highly competitive talent market as the one we're experiencing now, it may be time to re-examine your talent acquisition strategies with an eye towards the importance of employer branding, and to ask yourself if you're focusing enough on developing and promoting a message that will attract new recruits.

If you're not sure how to answer this last question, fear not! We've put together a comprehensive guide to developing and promoting a strong brand narrative that speaks to your target audience. Think of this as your playbook for effective employer branding.

As the competition for high-quality employees heats up, it may be time to re-examine your talent acquisition strategies and focus more on developing and promoting your message as a brand.

Here's What You'll Learn:

- How a Strong Brand Helps You Attract Top Talent
- Evaluating Your Employer Brand Awareness and Reputation
- What Makes a Brand Stand Out?
- Defining Your Employee Value Proposition
- All About Sourcing
- How to Use Social Media to Amplify Your Employer Brand
- What Does the Candidate Journey Mean for Your Employer Brand?
- Conclusion

1. How a Strong Brand Helps You Attract Top Talent

A recent LinkedIn survey found that 83% of nearly 4,000 corporate HR leaders polled believe a strong employer plays a crucial role in an organization's ability to hire, retain, and motivate quality employees. But why do so many HR professionals place so much value on employer brand?

For starters, and perhaps most importantly, it can significantly influence a candidate's decision on whether or not to engage with your company.

Another LinkedIn study revealed the following:

- 75% of job seekers consider an employer's brand before even applying for a job.
- The #1 obstacle candidates experience when searching for a job is not knowing what it's like to work at an organization.

What does this mean for recruiters?

First off, it means that the time to consider your company's reputation and status is long before you post a job ad. The best employees will want to work for reputable companies that are perceived as being among the best in their industries. If your business doesn't have that kind of cachet it's time to make a concerted effort to change the narrative around your company.

You need to provide a well-defined message about the benefits of working for your company that will attract top candidates who will easily mesh with your company culture.

To accomplish this, you need to start thinking about your employee value proposition (EVP), and ensuring that it is clearly communicated to candidates throughout each stage of the recruitment process.

It might seem like immediate benefits such as pay, work hours, bonuses, and lifestyle fit are the only things that matter when attracting new, high-quality recruits. But in point of fact, the kinds of employees who can make substantial contributions to your company are interested in things other than money.

To put it simply, these non-monetary rewards comprise your EVP. Some examples of these intangible value propositions include:

- Alignment to company core values
- Making a difference in the world or a particular field
- Professional development and exciting growth opportunities
- New learning opportunities
- Career stability and company growth
- Creative and intellectual challenges
- Working for a company with a strong reputation.

The Benefits of a Strong Employer Brand:

- Increase employee engagement.
- Reduce your cost per hire. 2,250 corporate recruiters in the U.S. found that average cost-per-hire is more than two times lower for companies with strong employer brands (source: LinkedIn).
- Attract workers from other companies. 84% of employees would consider leaving their current jobs if offered another role at a company with an excellent reputation. (source: Glassdoor).
- Gain a competitive advantage by targeting passive job seekers.
- Grow your company. Quality employees support your organization's ability to deliver high levels of customer satisfaction.

2. Evaluating Your Employer Brand Awareness and Reputation

In the previous chapter, you got a glimpse of some of the benefits that make a strong employer brand an essential asset. But what exactly does a strong employer brand look like, and how do you measure its effectiveness?

For starters, there are a few key metrics that will give you a sense of how healthy your employer brand is:

- **Retention Rate:** What percentage of new employees still work for your company after three months?
- **Employee Productivity:** Are employees more engaged and more determined to give you their best effort?
- **Quality of Hire:** Are you noticing an increase in quality applicants?
- **Cost Per Hire:** Have you managed to reduce the cost of your average hire?
- **Talent Pipeline:** Has your strategy resulted in a more robust talent pool?

As you strengthen your employer brand, you should see noticeable improvements in some or all of these categories. Internally, you can also create brand awareness studies, gather existing employee testimonials, and conduct new-hire surveys. These will all help you form a better understanding of how your brand is perceived in terms of reputation—and what you can do to improve it.

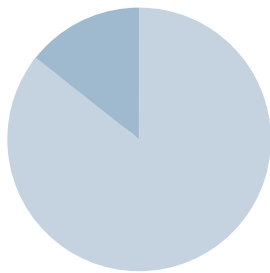
Branching out, you might also research your company's reviews on popular job sites like Glassdoor, as these often weigh heavily in a candidate's decision

to apply for a position at your company or not.

Once you take the time to assess your current employer brand awareness and reputation, you may discover that it requires some strategic tweaking.

Lack of employer brand gravity

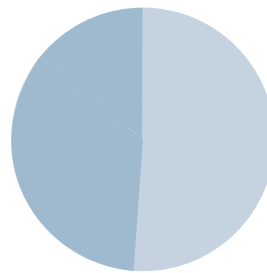
<10%
hires generated from the career page



Companies with poor EB awareness are dependent on third-party hiring solutions. As such, hiring costs are high and time to fill is not aligned with

Strong employer brand gravity

+40%
hires generated from the career page



Companies with strong EB generate a high volume of organic applies with lower CPH and faster time to fill.

In the next chapter, we'll start to lay out the techniques that companies use to optimize their public image and communicate their value to prospective employees. Let's dive in!



3. What Makes a Brand Stand Out?

These days, in-demand applicants have plenty of options to choose from, so your brand needs to convince job seekers that your organization isn't just another 9-to-5, it's the place to work. How do you do that? By differentiating yourself from the competition.

At its simplest, this process can be boiled down to two steps:

Step 1: Defining your employee value proposition (EVP)

Step 2: Sourcing

Step 1: Defining Your Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

" At the core, an effective brand has a clear, compelling, and-consistent promise so that in acrowded and noisy employment market, a meaningful message of differentiation can be heard."

Rob Silzer and Ben E. Dowell

If employer brand is the story you tell potential recruits, EVP is should be the main character. Everything that follows should revolve around it.

EVP is the foundation of a strong employer brand, and the key to carving out a reputation as authentic, trustworthy, and engaging. A distinctive, well-defined EVP will bolster your ability to attract high-quality candidates and can even reduce compensation premiums for new hires.

So, how do you define (or re-define) what your value proposition is?

For starters, ask yourself two questions:

- What do your employees get from your organization in exchange for their time, loyalty, efforts, and ongoing engagement?
- How is what you're offering distinct from that of your competitors?

Your answer can take the form of anything from obvious career benefits like a clear career trajectory and new learning opportunities to things like cool office spaces, challenging or intellectually engaging work, and flexible hours.

A clear, attractive EVP helps create alignment between your company's goals and those of its current and future employees, offering job seekers in particular a memorable distillation of the kind of experience they can expect working for your company. Not only can this make the employee retention process easier, it can inspire increased employee engagement, resulting in improved ROI for your company.

As you work to define your EVP, here are a some best practices to keep in mind:

- Make sure that your EVP aligns with the overall goals of your organization.
- Search for any disconnect between the benefits you offer and what your employees actually want. Do this at least once a year.
- Define a specific EVP for each group of employees, as different positions often come with different needs.
- Clearly communicate any changes in your EVP as soon as possible.
- If possible, try to anticipate any of your employees' future needs in your EVP.

Every stage of an employee's lifecycle at your company puts a brick in your employer brand. That includes every organizational policy or procedure, every conversation about your brand among colleagues, every opinion, every testimonial, every individual and collective experience that is in any way related to your company.

More than that, if you don't define your brand as an employer, there is the risk of others doing it for you. Online platforms have given power to employees who can now use them to share their experience of working for your company, and these reviews are often an important part of applicants' research practices.

That's a lot of factors, and at this point you may be wondering how it's possible to take control of them all as you shape your brand. Luckily, there are strategies and tools you can employ to craft experiences that align with your core mission and values. For example:

- Internal company training for continuous learning opportunities
- Corporate culture programs
- Company networking events
- Public relations strategies

That said, it's crucial to be honest with honest. Be sure that your stated brand values and EVP should align with the reality of your employees' daily experiences in working for your company. Otherwise, you could risk disappointing new employees, leading to low levels of engagement and poor retention rates. Employer brand is the creative expression of your EVP. Ultimately, all these tactics are meant to help you create a standalone brand that is truly memorable.

Step 2: All About Sourcing

Once you've developed a brand that incorporates a strong EVP, the next step is to get your message out into the world so you can start attracting the candidates with whom your brand will resonate.

This is the step that finally puts the "awareness" in "employer brand awareness." You want to promote your organization as a top employment

destination across as many channels as possible. This way, you remain top of mind and reaffirm a positive reputation with candidates who encounter your messaging repeatedly.

Consider leveraging these opportunities to build and promote your employer brand:

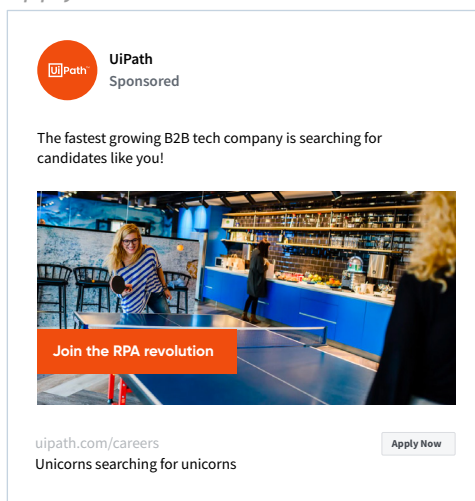
- Your career site. Try to make it as personal as possible, with relevant company info as well as photos of the team, employee quotes and testimonials, and so on.
- Your LinkedIn company page. Your social media profiles are prime real estate for repackaging the information on your career site in a more streamlined way.
- Employee referral programs. Building a strong internal brand that stimulates referrals is as just important as external branding.
- Employees' profile pages. Encourage your employees to share company news and updates on their personal LinkedIn pages.
- Job boards and job descriptions. Job advertisements are a prime example to communicate your brand to applicants who are looking for new opportunities.
- Social media channels. Social media is one of the most powerful tools in your arsenal. So much so that we've devoted the entire following chapter to it.

4. How to Use Social Media to Amplify Your Employer Brand

Social media has brought changes to every corner of the global economy, and the world of recruitment is no different. Case in point, one of the first things potential candidates will do is look up your company on social media.

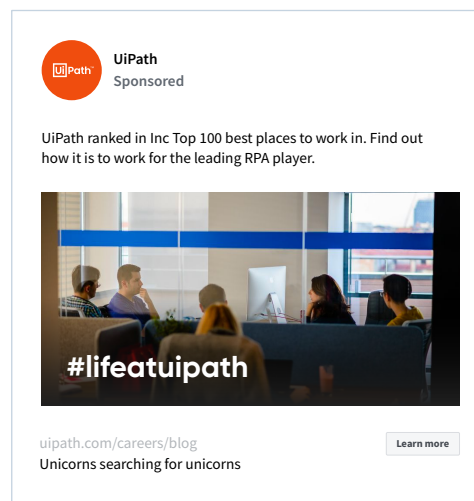
This can be something of a double edged sword. On the one hand, your employer brand and company history are now highly public. On the other, social platforms now offer exciting new opportunities for hiring managers to generate goodwill and provide job seekers a first-hand view of life at the company—meaning that if you're not leveraging social media, you are missing out on an excellent opportunity to engage and attract outstanding candidates.

Apply Now ad



The ad features the UiPath logo and 'Sponsored' text. The main text reads: 'The fastest growing B2B tech company is searching for candidates like you!' Below this is a photo of a woman in a blue and white striped shirt standing in a modern office space. An orange button with the text 'Join the RPA revolution' is overlaid on the bottom left of the photo. At the bottom of the ad, the URL 'uipath.com/careers' and the text 'Unicorns searching for unicorns' are displayed, along with an 'Apply Now' button.

Learn more ad



The ad features the UiPath logo and 'Sponsored' text. The main text reads: 'UiPath ranked in Inc Top 100 best places to work in. Find out how it is to work for the leading RPA player.' Below this is a photo of several people sitting around a table in a meeting room. The hashtag '#lifeatuipath' is overlaid on the bottom left of the photo. At the bottom of the ad, the URL 'uipath.com/careers/blog' and the text 'Unicorns searching for unicorns' are displayed, along with a 'Learn more' button.

One of the most significant advantages social media has provided recruiters in the past few years is the ability to reach potential applicants in different stages of the recruitment process. Even if the desired candidate is not actively

looking for a job, a strong employer brand can stick in her mind and increase the likelihood that she will eventually consider your company as a place of employment.

Once these first points of contact have been accomplished, there are numerous strategies you can use to amplify your employer brand on social media:

- Use your company's LinkedIn page to communicate information about your core mission, brand values, and goals.
- Mentor, advise, share relevant blog posts, and respond to queries on your Facebook profile. This will encourage engagement and make your employer brand more personal, genuine, and authentic.
- Generate passion and excitement for your organization's mission and goals. Use content on social media to demonstrate your brand expertise and to create an ongoing discussion about your company culture.
- Join in the conversation on forums and online communities where you don't control the message about your brand.
- Encourage and make it easy for your employees to share positive brand messages on their personal social media accounts. Job seekers are more likely to trust an employee's review or comment than ones from the company itself.

PRO TIP: Use recruitment marketing automation tools to attract passive candidates on social media and other online platforms. Even though these candidates are not actively looking for new employment, many of them would gladly switch jobs if the right opportunity presented itself. By reaching these

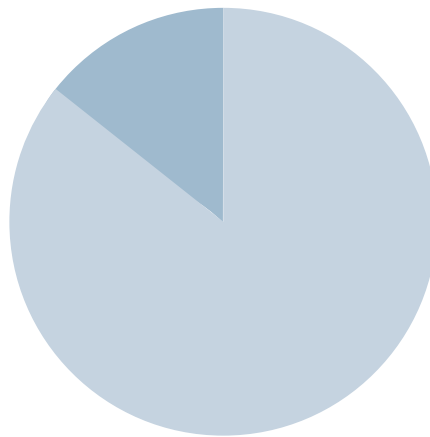
candidates early and often, you get them excited about the prospects of working for your organization and prime them for an eventual application.

Only 20% of candidates are on traditional recruitment platforms.

Automation technology offers you a chance to reach the other 80%, many of whom are present on the most popular social media platforms.

20% —————
Active job-seekers - reachable mostly on job platforms.

80% —————
Passive candidates - reachable with advertising and content marketing for recruitment.



5. What Does the Candidate Journey Mean for Your Employer Brand?

As we've been discussing your employer brand, we've consistently considered the impact that your decisions will have on the people you're hoping to attract into your talent pipeline. That's because employer branding, in addition to being an important concept in its own right, is inextricably linked to both candidate experience and the candidate journey.

Typically, your branding acts as the first touch for both candidate experience (which refers to the user's perspective for each step in the application process) and the candidate journey (which is essentially the recruitment funnel from the perspective of the applicant), acting not just as an invitation to discover more about your brand but as an initial chance to delight your audience

Just as employer brand impacts candidate experience, candidate experience can have a big impact on your employer brand. Social media and review sites have empowered modern candidates to speak their minds and share their experience with possible employers, and any past applicants who were put off by your applicant experience won't be shy about telling others.

In this way, ineffective management of your candidate experience can have serious, long-term consequences.

A Possible Scenario:

Let's say a candidate is treated poorly during the interview phase, is frustrated by the application form on your site, or encounters other hurdles along the hiring process. Nothing stops her from going online and sharing her bad experience with the rest of the world via social media, forums, and review

sites.

This is why it's crucial to treat candidates like companies treat their customers: with strong attention to detail and a high level of concern for their overall experience.

To improve a candidate's journey, make sure to:

- Deliver the best possible user interface for online applications.
- Provide a clear framework for the hiring process to help candidates gain a sense of control.
- Set clear expectations from the start.
- Allow candidates to express themselves freely and listen care fully to what they say.
- Give examples that reinforce fairness and transparency at your company.
- Provide some form of closure once all the recruitment steps are completed.

Demand accountability throughout every step of the candidate's journey.

With these steps, you can work to preserve the employer brand that you've worked so hard to create and further cement your status as a top employment destination.

6. Conclusion

As competition for high-quality talent gets stiffer, companies need to take a proactive approach to differentiating themselves from the competition. Organizations that successfully develop, market, and maintain an attractive employer brand image put themselves in position to win the race for attracting and retaining top talent in any economic climate.

That said, your employer brand is established in real-time, and it requires maintenance, upkeep, and continued attention, even when things are going well. Slack off, and you could lose control of your brand narrative, and lose the attention of your target audience in the process.

Perhaps now more than ever, every organization needs a comprehensive, long-term strategy for attracting high-quality recruits and developing a robust talent pipeline—one that can help create and maintain a culture of success and productivity within your organization. To that end, you ignore employer branding at your own peril.



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