

## The Importance of Strong Employer Branding During the Interview Process

In today's competitive hiring landscape, companies need a cohesive and well-defined brand to help them stand out from other businesses that are also hoping to attract top talent.

Many companies spend considerable resources developing their corporate website and social media presence to reflect their brand. However, what some organizations don't realize is that a company's employer brand - their reputation as an employer - can be observed as early as the interview process. If your interview process reflects and strengthens your company's brand - instead of detracting from it - you can gain a competitive edge in recruitment.

Here are some ways that companies can strengthen their employer branding through the interview process:

### Revamp your careers page

Nearly every company has a careers/jobs page on its website, or even a separate careers site, but few take the time to create one that spotlights their employer brand. Don't miss this important opportunity to reflect your organization's mission and values through the copy, voice and design of the site. This can be further demonstrated by highlighting top performers within the organization, allowing jobs seekers to learn about featured employees' career growth and overall experience working for the company. Ultimately, every element of the careers page/site and its linked job descriptions should mesh with your company's brand.

Your company website and company review sites such as Glassdoor play an increasingly important role in the way candidates assess your organization. The [2018 MRINetwork Reputation Management Study](#) found top

methods for evaluating an employer brand were employee referrals (59 percent), company website (56 percent), Glassdoor (38 percent) with employee testimonials ranking 4th (at 28 percent). "Your employer and external brands need to be closely aligned in order to present your organization consistently and effectively," advises Vince Webb, vice president of marketing for

**MRINetwork.** "If there is a disconnect between how you present yourself to the outside world and how your employees view the company, your brand will suffer from a confusing message that fails to attract top candidates."

**Use technology to make scheduling and follow-up easier**

If the interview scheduling process is too complicated or it takes a long time for a hiring manager to contact applicants to set up an interview, top candidates can develop a negative perception of your business. To prevent this, some companies are speeding up the process by using technology to make interview scheduling easier.

For example, PricewaterhouseCoopers started using a new online platform that enables candidates to select a time for their interviews, as a LinkedIn Pulse article explained. The platform features a calendar that notes the availability of internal interviewers and then auto-updates after candidates choose their time. Before the process, it took an average of six days to schedule an interview. The online tool, however, has shortened it to just one day.

An efficient, streamlined interview process that engages candidates and keeps them in the loop on the status of their application can also help companies create a more positive applicant experience and, in turn, a more positive employer brand. According to the Reputation Management Study, almost half of candidates (47 percent) feel lack of communication through the interview process is one of the biggest turnoffs during the interview process. "The details of the interview



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coordination and process reveal volumes about operating priorities and corporate values,” observes an applicant that responded to the Study. Ultimately astute candidates want a hiring experience that’s high-tech, but also high-touch and personal. If they’re left hanging in limbo, they’re likely to move on.

## Ask more relevant interview questions

Scrap the cookie-cutter questions during interviews and instead see the conversation as a way to share insight with the candidate on your company’s culture. Ask questions that require critical thinking and that relate to your company’s mission and values to gain a better sense of whether the candidate is a good fit for the role. For example, you can ask interviewees to describe a time they overcame a work challenge that is relevant to your company’s ethics. Or, if collaboration is important to your organization, you can ask them about whether they prefer to solve problems on their own or with the help of others.

It’s also important that everyone involved in the interview process has the same understanding of the position’s requirements. Thirty-six percent of candidates in the Reputation Management Study said that discovering discrepancies among interviewers about job duties was the second biggest turnoff they encountered while interviewing. “Consistency is critical,” said an employer responding to the survey. “The messages that are portrayed during the interview process are such an important piece of the selection process that we’ve hired an HR manager to focus on that aspect in our hiring processes.” Ultimately, the bottom-line requirements of the job should be discussed among the interviewing team in advance, to ensure that candidates will be asked job-related questions built around critical job competencies. Interviewers who have a clear picture of the skills that the candidates need to have in order to be successful are more likely to identify the best person for the position.

## Create a positive interview environment

When candidates come into your office to interview, be sure they’re entering an environment that’s indicative of a positive work culture. Ensure hiring managers or HR

professionals start the interview on time, they have already reviewed the candidate’s resume and drafted pertinent questions before the interview begins. Leave ample time for the interview to avoid a rushed experience, and be sure to cover issues that are important to sought-after candidates.

Creating a positive interview environment also means selling candidates on the things that make your organization great. Applicants are very clear about the factors that influence their perception of your employer brand. The MRINetwork Study revealed that emphasis on work-life balance and advancement opportunities were highly ranked, at 47 and 40 percent respectively.

“Companies that offer flexible work arrangements and career pathing programs create an employee-centric vibe where staff feel they are a top priority,” says Anne Hayden, vice president of human resources for MRINetwork. “Promoting these types of offerings to candidates, is just one more thing your team can do to leave a lasting impression during interviews.”

The interview process is a critical opportunity for companies to present a strong, unified brand identity. Organizations that fail to recognize the importance of their employer brand and the need to monitor it accordingly, are likely to find themselves losing out on the best talent while companies that have great employer branding and offer an excellent candidate experience have no problem attracting the best and brightest.