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A Beginner's Guide to Employer Branding__

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When consultant Simon Barrow introduced the term “employer brand” in 1990, many HR and communications professionals dismissed it as another marketing buzzword. In fact, it wasn’t until a few years later — when job boards went virtual — that the term received widespread attention.

Almost overnight, employees gained access to millions of opportunities across the country, making the labor market even more competitive — and not just for job seekers. Organizations were under increased pressure to attract and retain top talent and their employer brand, defined by Barrow as “the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment,” became the focus.

Today, many companies understand the value of employer branding, and recognize that how they market themselves to prospective employees is as important as how they market themselves to customers.

An effective employer brand:

- **Attracts talent:** Candidates can be quick to judge a company by its employer brand and the position it holds in the market — and this is especially true in highly competitive sectors. Regardless of the role that needs filling, you want prospective hires to have a clear and complete picture of your organization’s priorities and goals since these can convince them to choose you over a competitor.
- **Builds credibility:** Similarly, an employer brand can help you retain team members and build loyalty. This can go a long way considering that

existing employees are ambassadors for your company. How they perceive your brand and share your perspectives (even in a single LinkedIn post) can foster trust both internally and externally.

That said, establishing an employer brand is easier said than done, and many organizations are still struggling to get it right. So what can you do to develop an employer brand that resonates? Here are a few things to keep in mind as you build out your strategy.

Refine Your Messages

Since the World of Work is constantly evolving, [revisiting how you communicate your company's mission and values](#) is a good first step. Not only should your messaging align with your culture and business vision, but it should also convey who prospective employees will become when they work for you. Your employer brand should inspire everyone — leaders, employees, and candidates — to do better, more meaningful work and contribute to your larger objectives.

Below are just a few examples of how some of the world’s top brands express what they do and who they want to work with:

- **Goldman Sachs:** “We think who you are makes you better at what you do.”
- **Bumble:** “Our mission is to create a world where all relationships are healthy and equitable.”
- **Everlane:** “Dear rule-breakers, questioners, straight-A students who skipped class: We want you.”
- **Salesforce:** “We harness technologies that revolutionize careers, companies, and the world.”

You should also make sure that the messages you use to attract talent complement those you use to attract

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consumers — and vice versa. Although intended for different audiences, both are used to communicate your purpose, mission, and culture to people outside the organization. Since it's likely that these messages will be shared on the same channels (e.g. your website, LinkedIn), they should be consistent.

Impress Your Prospects

Once you've got a prospective employee's attention, it's critical that they have a positive experience from start to finish. Job seekers aren't shy about posting online reviews or sharing their opinions about a company's hiring process. If they have a negative experience, you risk losing that prospect as well as future ones.

First and foremost, [your hiring methods should reflect your employer brand](#). If your company values speed and agility, for example, you shouldn't needlessly drag out the application process. Likewise, a company that claims to value innovation but uses an outdated HR platform to interact with prospects will send a conflicting message. Also, think through how to release prospects from the interview process if they are not a fit. After all, they may not just be prospective employees, but potential customers, too.

Appreciate Your Employees

As mentioned, a compelling employer brand will attract and *retain* employees. Achieving a low turnover rate [begins at the hiring stage](#); you need to ensure individuals are the right fit for the role, the team, and the organization as a whole. But the work doesn't stop there.

Once a position is filled, you need to show that you value individuals' commitment and dedication. While appreciation can take many forms, from enabling employees to work on projects they enjoy to rewarding their achievements, each action goes a long way towards fostering loyalty and proving that you've created an exceptional place to work. Find meaningful ways to celebrate your individual, team and company-wide wins

and allow these success stories to permeate your external brand when appropriate.

Measure Your Success

Speaking of employee retention, it's essential that you figure out the ROI of your employer branding strategy. Metrics such as application rate, source of hire, career site traffic, time to fill, employee satisfaction, and retention rate can all help determine if your employer brand is effective.

Whatever KPIs you choose to track, make sure you're analyzing them regularly to see what's working and what's not — and measure them against key milestones and events. If application rate improves after a new employer brand campaign launches, it's a good sign your messaging is resonating with the workforce.

At the end of the day, creating a strong employer brand requires three things: developing an authentic corporate culture, consistently communicating your values, and regularly evaluating the employee experience. It's worth the time and effort: companies that nurture and promote their employer brand are often the ones who attract and retain the world's top talent.