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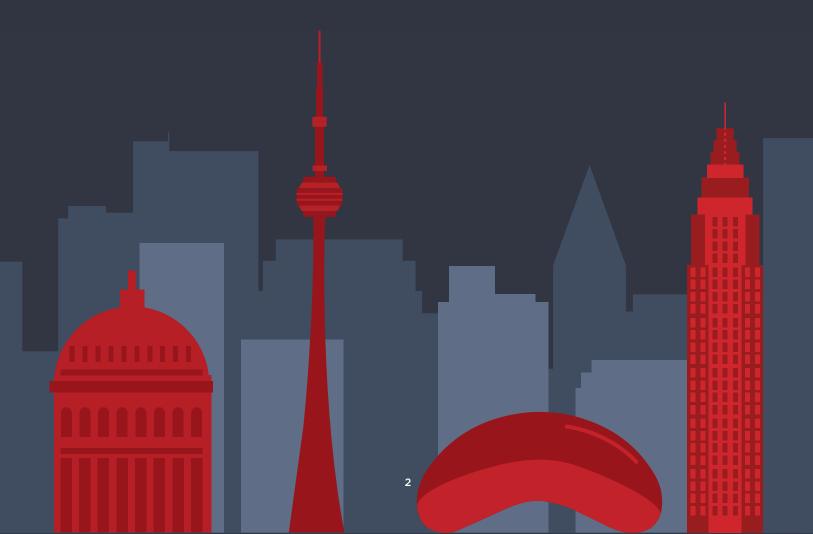
Trends in Employer Branding: How to Invest Your Resources in 2020

Overview

As hiring teams look ahead to 2020 planning, our insights provide a glimpse into emerging trends that will help teams stay ahead of the curve when it comes to developing a strong employer brand strategy. While many employer brand tactics today are focused on short-term talent acquisition goals, what works today inevitably won't work tomorrow.

Coupling our proprietary data with advice from employer brand experts at HubSpot, Universum, Wayfair and Instacart, consider this your go-to guide for understanding upcoming trends in employer brand strategies and how to invest your employer brand resources in 2020.

Mirroring digital marketing best practices

The concept of an employer brand has been around for years. However, the ways in which it is implemented and practiced varies greatly across companies, and has changed rapidly overtime. While the employer branding strategies of the past may have relied very heavily on job boards and reviews sites, companies are now creating a full ecosystem of tools and technologies to support their tactics throughout the candidate journey. As a company's employer brand strategy matures, companies "are seeing the complete 360-degree candidate ecosystem and making lots of small adjustments to create alignment and candidate credibility over the entire journey," says James Ellis, Director of Employer Brand at Universum.

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> **Instacart**

With this in mind, employer brand teams are now beginning to measure themselves much like digital marketing teams — with the customer journey in mind at each step. Colleen Finnegan, Senior Manager, Employer Brand & Recruitment Marketing at Instacart, tells us, "You have to be all of the places. Candidates are consumers of workplaces, you have to hit them at the right time and place. With this shift, you see employer brands showing up across digital marketing channels, social media, and IRL (experiential)." James adds, "Companies are starting to shift their overall recruiting mindset from 'put butts in seats' to 'build relationships with candidates before you need to engage them.' This relationship-first model positions employer brand as the lead in recruitment strategy."

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Much like their counterparts in marketing, employer brand strategists of the future have to be data-driven and measure themselves on how candidates are responding to campaigns and messaging at each step of the candidate experience. Simply put, Elliott Garlock, Head of Strategic Talent Sourcing & Employer Branding at Wayfair, explains that, "the core purpose of employer branding is to build a data-driven, systematic marketing and technological machine that drives more efficient and effective hiring outcomes for recruiting organizations."

Looking ahead to 2020 and beyond, an employer brand strategy that treats candidates as "the consumers of the workplace" will become the norm and teams will be measuring their impact across the entire candidate journey from first-impression to offer letter. But best-in-class employer branding teams know that their work doesn't stop once the offer letter is signed. They also understand how their work impacts employee engagement and retention.

A connective device between candidate journey and employee engagement

As a practice, employer branding is still primarily focused on external candidate engagement and aligned to talent acquisition goals. However, in the future, our experts predict that employer brand teams will start to become the connective tissue between your journey as an external candidate to an employee of the company. Colleen shares that "employer brand tactics are also being used to engage current employees."

The employer brand team at HubSpot shares a similar approach and actually utilizes their employees as key drivers of their tactics. Hannah Fleishman, Senior Manager, Employer Brand at HubSpot, tells us that "employer branding has become more employee-driven. Surprisingly, that wasn't always the case; it used to be that companies were hesitant to hand their social media accounts over to employees for takeovers, or encourage them to publish content without an approval process. But now I see more companies embracing the fact that employees, unfiltered, are amazing marketers. Not only is their content authentic and full of personality, but candidates trust information from employees 3x more than they trust information from employers."

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Employee-driven content is just one example of how companies are tying together their candidate and employee journeys. Elliot predicts "employer branding will drive large components of talent management strategy. As more talent organizations become more progressive in their thinking and strategic in their approach, I think you will see more technology, process, and branding integration through all aspects of the talent life cycle in a company. Fundamentally it is full journey experiences that need to be designed."

When companies are developing their employer brand strategies, they should call upon the voices of their employees. Not only does this approach create an authentic candidate experience, it helps engage your current employees. And when it comes to talent attraction and employee retention, authenticity and transparency are key motivators.

Bringing your whole self to work, wherever that may be

Our 2019 Brand Health Report revealed just how important authenticity, personalization and transparency are to candidates when considering new job opportunities. In fact, 71% of candidates are motivated by transparent salary upfront and 58% of candidates are interested in engaging with companies that take the time to personalize their outreach. Because demand is outpacing available candidates for technology roles, it is more critical than ever for companies to listen to what candidates are telling them.

Q: **What persuades tech knowledge workers to engage with a recruiter?**

A: Candidates crave a less painful hiring process as they sort through dozens of job listings and go through multiple phone screens, which is why transparency goes a long way. Nearly three-quarters (71%) of respondents say seeing salary ranges up front is the number one motivator for engaging with a recruiter.

71%   **56**%   **53**%

Salary range upfront   A recognizable company name   A personalized message

Build trust with salary transparency

Leading with salary upfront saves time on both ends. For candidates, it ensures they don't go through the process without ensuring their salary expectations match up with the prospective employer. For companies, salary transparency will help response rates when reaching out and ensure potential new hires are on the same page before reaching the final stages of the interview process.

Top employers are taking note of these trends. One huge area of continued focus is in their diversity, inclusion and belonging efforts. "A few years ago, employers were afraid to talk about diversity, especially in tech, but now we're seeing more companies publish their diversity data, evaluate their candidate touch-points for inclusion, and talk openly about their programming for employees of color, women, LGBTQ employees, parents, employees with disabilities and all forms of diversity and background. The top brands, though, are the ones who aren't just building a more inclusive brand but are making diversity and inclusion core business priorities internally," notes Hannah.

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HubSpot also has a hunch that companies will not only need to invest in advocating for candidates to bring their whole selves to work — they should also start meeting candidates where they are, literally. Hannah predicts, "We're going to see more companies investing time and energy into their remote employer brand. But remote work isn't a trend. It's the future. One third of professionals would switch jobs for a remote opportunity (Gallup). As employers, that means we should be focused on creating amazing employee experiences for remote workers first, and building our external remote brand second."

Hired's data also highlights tech workers' appetite for flexible and remote work options. More than a quarter (29%) of tech candidates won't consider commuting more than 30 minutes for a job and 65% are interested in working 100% remotely.

What the trends tell us

Best-in-class employer branding teams know that an exceptional candidate experience is a strategic advantage for the company — not only to be able to recruit world-class talent, but to retain them. Top employer brand experts are utilizing digital marketing techniques and likening the candidate experience to the customer journey and meeting candidates across channels and forms of media.

To accomplish your long-term, strategic talent initiatives, it's imperative to stay proactive and listen to what candidates are sharing about what matters most to them. Not only does this allow you to bridge the gap between the candidate experience and employee engagement, it brings a level of authenticity to your brand that appeals to a diverse pool of candidates.

In this era of automation, we've consistently heard that today's tech talent craves more authenticity as they evaluate employers. To compete for game-changing technical talent, employer brand strategies will need to lead with transparency in every aspect of their hiring process and take a personalized approach to candidate outreach. Since your company's employer brand is a long-term strategic asset, companies will invest more heavily by creating dedicated roles and budgets, with digital and brand marketers gaining more influence in employer brand and talent marketing decisions.