

HOW YOU SHOULD

MARKET YOUR EMPLOYER BRAND



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Introduction

Company branding doesn't stop at products. Employer branding—how employees and potential future hires perceive your company—is a valuable brand asset that deserves as much thoughtfulness as your products.

A company's employer brand represents what it means to be an employee in their organization. The [formal definition](#) is “The use of a branding strategy to influence the way present and potential employees view the employing organization.”

The goal of employer branding, by definition, is “to develop a coherent employer or employment brand, comprising a package of financial, economic, psychological, and symbolic elements that, in combination, improve the ability to recruit and retain staff. Employer branding is associated with a desire to become an employer of choice and compete effectively in the war for talent.”

“People sometimes think of marketing as just an external function. But you have to sell to your employees just as much as you need to sell to customers,” as Diane Grad [said during a #WorkTrends](#) podcast.

Your employer brand not only exists for current employees but also for former and future employees. Just as your product marketing strategy evolves, so does your employer brand.

Does employer branding make a difference?

As the competition to attract and retain top talent increases, organizations must establish strong employer brands. When employer brands are supported by a strong message and a clear purpose, they create several benefits for employers, including:

- Recruiting and retaining top talent
- Motivating and engaging employees
- Becoming an “employer of choice” for job-seekers who want more than a salary

But, can an employer brand truly have an impact? The answer to that question is a resounding “yes.” The [Society for Human Resources \(SHRM\)](#) reports that 90% of applicants will apply for a job if the employer brand is “actively maintained,” and 92% of people say they would leave a job if a new company has a good reputation.

LinkedIn data also [attributes many benefits](#) to a strong employer brand, including:

- Reducing turnover by 28% and cost per hire by 50%
- Receiving 50% more qualified candidates
- Hiring rates that are one to two times faster than without a strong brand

Strong employer brands offer potential talent and employees a message with which they can connect. The term was [introduced in 1996](#), and by 2001, of North American companies surveyed, 40% said they were “actively engaged in some form of employer branding activity.” Since then, it’s become a strategic imperative for any company that wants to compete for talent.

There's no question about employer branding's importance—just how to do it right. This is where HR leaders can learn from their partners in brand marketing. If you're an HR leader looking to establish or enhance your employer brand, it's time to reach out and partner with the marketing team.

As partners, HR and marketing professionals bring the unique skills and abilities required to create and deliver the employer brand. To establish the most powerful employer brand and strategy, these two groups must collaborate, partner, and use their strengths to create a unified approach that delivers what the modern organization requires to engage its talent fully.



How can marketing support HR's employer branding efforts?

A strong partnership between marketing and HR creates a powerful opportunity to deliver employer branding efforts that will make your organization stand out.

“Though perhaps not an obvious pairing, a strong partnership between marketing and human resources can reap substantial returns for companies looking to stand out in a competitive marketplace,” [Ben Plomion, CMO, told Forbes](#).

“The synergy stems from the inherent similarities between the two disciplines. In each case, success relies on building strong brand awareness, delivering top-notch user experiences, and effectively communicating a company's values. The only

difference, really, is the audience. While marketing targets current and prospective clients, in human resources, the ‘clients’ are current and prospective employees.”

The marketing team and the skills they possess serve as essential resources in guaranteeing there is alignment for anyone who interacts with the brand—as a customer, employee, or candidate.

Whether it's visually appealing design, conversion-based copy, or a catchy tagline, marketers are experts at creating targeted content that inspires their audience. When you're trying to engage with current and future employees, having the support of a skilled marketer in these areas helps immensely. Marketers are experts at developing the kinds of promotional campaigns you can use to raise awareness, along with the tactics you need to convince employees and candidates to get or stay engaged with your organization.

As part of employer branding, HR leaders must develop messaging that represents the company as an employer of choice and represents the larger brand. As the internal experts—maybe even the owners of your organization's brand—the marketing team can create a powerful employer brand that's in alignment and supports the organization's overall brand.

When HR and marketing team members collaborate, both groups benefit. HR effectively communicates their message, and marketers see how the employee experience is an extension of the overall brand.

This type of cross-functional collaboration is key to any organization's success. By partnering to develop a successful employer brand, these two functions illustrate for the entire company how a spirit of partnership can drive results in the organization.



What elements are important to your employer brand?

The marketing team may be experts in design and content; however, it's essential to bring your HR skills and knowledge to the conversation. In addition to the visual message, a strong employer brand must represent what your organization stands for, as well as what current and future employees can expect from you as an employer. Knowing the power an employer brand holds, it's essential to consider the employment messages you want to communicate carefully.

Demonstrate your company mission and values. If you want to attract and retain employees who share your mission and align with your values, the employer brand must communicate and demonstrate how you're putting those aspirations into action.

Example: Microsoft's brand sets the goal: "Be the one who empowers millions." Their employer brand statement is closely aligned: "To empower every individual and every organization on the planet to achieve more." There is [an intentional and close relationship](#) between the public brand and the employer brand. Ideally, this alignment makes it easy for employees to find a good culture fit in Microsoft as an employer and then align their role to the organization's overall goals.

Identify what's unique about your organization.

Just as your company brand has a unique selling proposition for buyers, the employer brand should speak to what you, as an employer, offer to employees that is unique. Clarify what your top candidates need and, in turn, what you offer them to meet those needs. Make sure you weave those individual elements and offerings into your branding.

Example: Starbucks refers to employees as partners—that's a unique feature of their organization. This seemingly simple naming convention helps employees take pride and ownership in their company, and Starbucks establishes an employer brand that shows how much they care about their employees.

Build trust by sharing your organization's story.

People want to be a part of something bigger than themselves. Sharing how your organization began is a powerful way to engage with your audience. If you've overcome significant challenges, that can be a story to share, too.

Example: rideshare provider Uber has had its share of ups and downs. To tackle the challenge of regaining employee trust, the CEO [released a video](#) to emphasize that he's listening to employees. This message effectively addresses the negative story while providing hope that this employer's brand is changing.

Highlight the employee experience. Ideally, an employer brand isn't really about you; it's about your employees. Why are they with your organization? When it comes to employee branding, a powerful tool is to let your employees answer candidates' questions: What's it like to work for your organization? Why did current employees choose to join the company? How do they describe your culture?

Of course, you can try to answer these questions—and you should have your answers. But the employee perspective is the most personable and relatable for candidates who want to hear real-life experiences and insights from their peers.

Example: Johnson & Johnson understands the power of examples in employer branding. That's why they showcase career milestones on their [careers website](#). Internal and external visitors alike can get inspiration from the career journeys of employees who have been with the organization for a few years to decades.

Design a sociable employer brand. As you start to create your employer brand's vision, keep social sharing in mind. You don't want to keep this brand to yourself, after all: it has the most power when it's easy to share. Design with this in mind so that you can easily create media and content that will instantly engage with your audience.

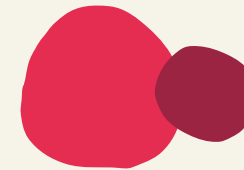
Example: For more than 150 years, the financial organization Wells Fargo worked to earn Americans' trust. A severe scandal in September of 2016 rocked that foundation and put leadership motives on the national stage. [To relaunch their employer brand](#) after this scandal, Wells Fargo created on-the-job videos to highlight what was good about working for the organization. They also used a social engagement tool to inspire current employees to share positive employment stories in the moment.

5 steps to create your employer brand from scratch

Use these five steps to start establishing or re-imagining your employer brand.

1. Define your ideal employees and candidates.

Just as marketers know their audience, you must fully understand yours. The first step in the process is to gain an understanding of your current and future employees. Focus on the ideal, top performers, as those are the people you want to keep and attract. Look for typical desires, goals, skills, and beliefs these people possess. This information will help you craft an employer brand message that resonates with them and retains their interest.



2. Gather input about the employee experience

Don't rely solely on your understanding of the employee experience. Instead, conduct focus groups and surveys to gather feedback from your employees about what it's like working at your organization. The data you collect will showcase what makes your organization unique and what keeps people engaged. Similarly, it will further inform your perspective about what matters most to the people you want to employ.

3. Partner with marketing.

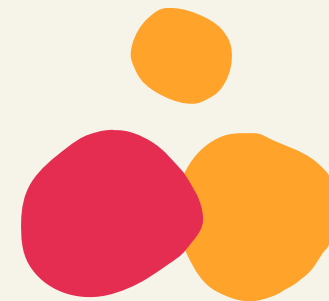
Once you've taken the initial steps to gather input from your audience, you're ready to engage with marketing to start the brand ideation process. Remember to bring your HR knowledge input to the conversation to ensure that the benefits of working with your organization are the primary focus of the marketing approach and materials. Ask the marketing team to provide a few options, if possible.

4. Test a few approaches.

Just as you held focus groups with employees to learn about your audience, consider hosting listening sessions with employees and possibly candidates to confirm which employer brand design or approach yields the reactions you want. Again, this is where the marketing team can help you run a "test" to gather data that will inform your choices about the final employer brand decision. After all the effort, you want to pick the brand that resonates most and will deliver the desired results.

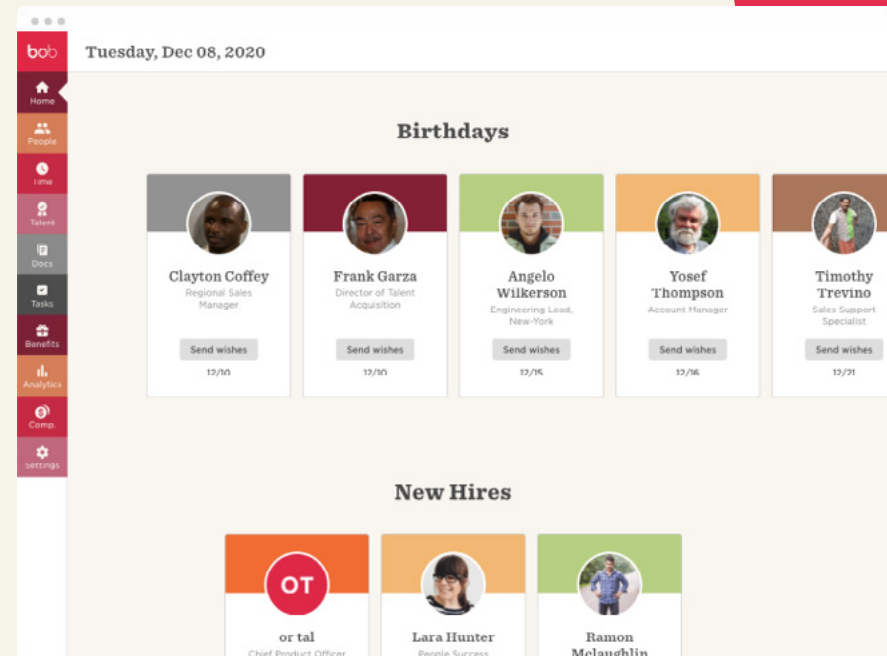
5. Celebrate and launch your employer brand!

Once you have a finalized employer brand, launch the content and approach to your internal stakeholders and existing employees. Make this something people are excited about throughout the company. This excitement will inspire them to share and reinforce, once again, why they joined your organization.



Meet bob

The role of HR is not just about managing human capital. In today's employment landscape, HR leaders need to build a company culture and employer brand that engages and retains employees and fosters camaraderie and commitment. bob puts people first instead of merely tracking or managing human resources. With its approachable and user-friendly look and feel, bob aims to empower employees, connect them to your company culture, and drive their positive employee experience (EX). Find out more about the Culture suite [here](#).



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when it comes to your people and organization.

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tools, get in touch with us at

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