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A catalyst for connection

WHITE PAPER

> Captivate Top Talent Through Employment Branding



> Introduction

Businesses use branding all of the time on their products and their services. There is no doubt about the power of it to get attention and sell products. But what would happen if you were to apply that marketing power and use some of those same techniques to be able to attract the top talent in your field?

You guessed it. When it is used properly, it would enable your company to be able to catch the attention of top talent, and have them sending in resumes to your company – unasked. Before long, you would actually have a list of highly qualified people waiting to fill any vacancies you would ever have. In that situation, sorting out the best of the best would be your only problem when you have an empty position.

Think about the possibilities of having the best talent in your field wanting to come and work for your company! What could that do for your bottom line!

This whitepaper will show you what employment branding is, how to apply it to your company, and then show you how to use it to attract the top talent you want. In addition, once it is properly put in place, you will also find that you can easily retain top talent – and get better performance out of the employees you already have.

The author of this whitepaper, Patrick Ropella, is an executive recruiter who has been responsible to find top executive talent for some of the largest companies in the world, including companies like Dow, Johnson & Johnson, DuPont, BASF, Shell, GE, Pfizer, and many more. He has been doing this for many years, and now shows you what he has taught to many large companies over the years.



The Power of Employment Branding

If you take a few moments to recall the days when you were last looking for a job, you may remember that some job ads seemed to stick out a little more than other ones. There was just something about them that caught your eye – and your attention. If you think about it just a little more, you may even remember that it was the ads of specific companies that seemed to create a longer lasting impression.

Going one step deeper into your recollection, you may also realize that even when two ads were advertising similar positions, that one of them was definitely more appealing to you. In fact, you might even say that when you saw those company's ads, that you also thought that you might even like to work there. Is it possible that simple job ads could be used to deliberately create such desires and opinions of companies in their reader's minds?

These impressions that you received when you read those ads were clearly not a coincidence, they were not an accident, and neither were they unique to you. Instead, they are an example of what is called employment branding, and the effect it had on you was deliberately crafted.

When employment branding is applied correctly, it can be used to plant and build powerful mental impressions of your company and the job opportunity within the minds of your employees, your community, and even in your employee candidates. These impressions relate to the daily activity (meaningful work), present level of satisfaction, and future expectations that employees have in your company and its treatment of them. It is also derived from your willingness and ability to meet their needs (salary and benefits) and listen to problems and provide solutions.

An additional powerful benefit of successful employee branding that you want in your company is that it can also be used to attract and retain the top talent in your particular market. When quality candidates see and hear the contentment and satisfaction level of employees in your company, you can be sure that they will want to get their resume to you for employment. In order to get this effect, the employment brand must be applied to your marketing department. It is at that point when you see that attracting and retaining higher quality employees can perform wonders for your bottom line.

When companies want to attract and keep the best employees, successful ones will look at their HR department and hiring managers as an extension of the marketing department. They do this because they know that good talent sourcing is a natural result of having a good employment brand.

Even when you are seeking to fill vacant positions from among your current employees, it requires the same emphasis. Having a strong employment brand in place will enable your company to retain its best talent, experience a lower turnover rate and have more employee referrals.

Building a strong employee brand first requires that you have a clear understanding of it. A quality brand worth having cannot be built without knowing exactly what it is, and it will not be built overnight, either. Once understood, everyone will be on the same page and you can move forward together and build it. Because it will be in everyone's best interest, you will also find that they will help you move up to new levels, and happy employees are better workers, too. A right understanding will enable you to get maximum mileage out of it – one that will allow everyone in your company to benefit.

What Is **Employee Branding**

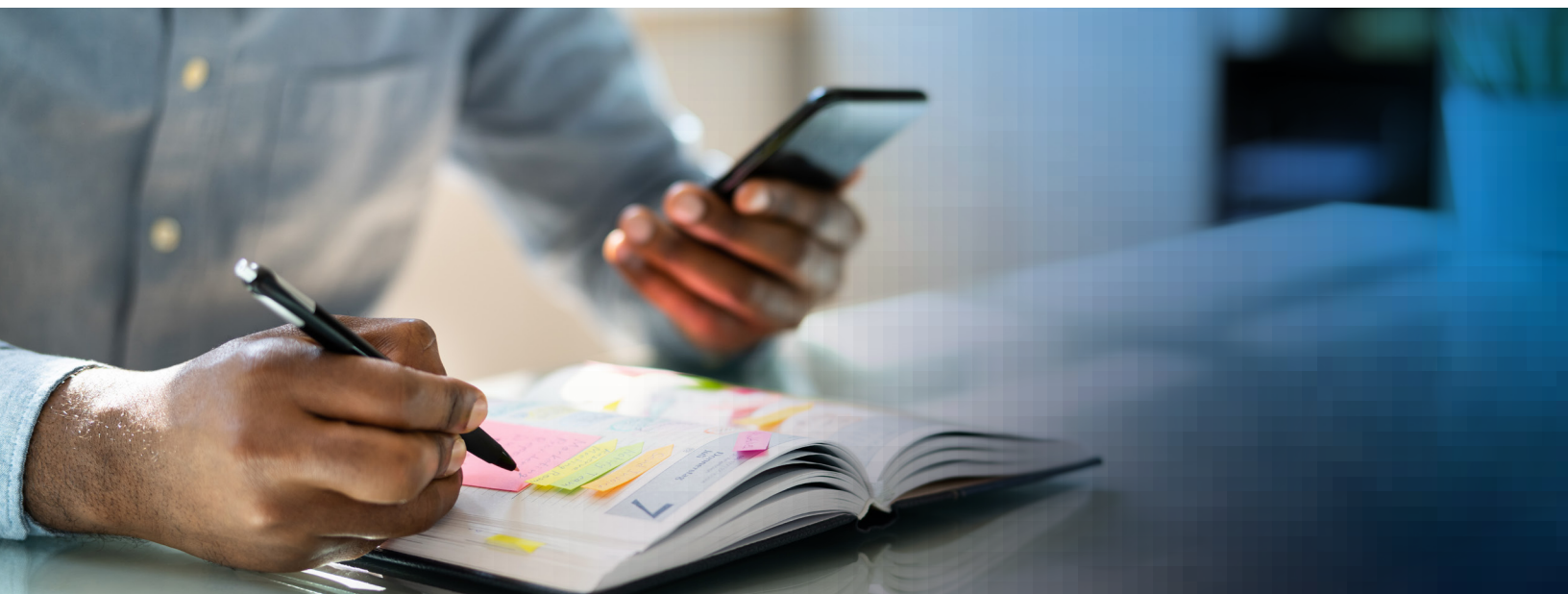
This is a vital skill for leaders during a crisis: They must set aside their egos and be willing to listen to all parties involved. Only through powerful listening can a leader build the right environment of openness, trust, and professionalism necessary to navigate everyone through the crisis. Even the simple act of taking notes (or even assigning a full-time scribe) is an invaluable listening tool that helps a leader assemble and digest the potentially powerful ideas of all involved. One way to describe employee branding is to describe it as the different avenues, or tools. When done properly, it will work on the physical feelings, create intellectual impressions, and even stimulate emotional experiences on the staff, the employees, and even on the candidates as they interact with others in your company. Building and maintaining a successful employment brand will not come easy. It will take work to establish it and to maintain it – but everyone will be happier for it. This will

require upgrading it regularly, evaluating it often, and modernizing it to keep it intact, relevant, and valuable to your company. Starting out, it will require getting input from everyone, including the managers, supervisors, corporate leaders, and even the employees. This flow of input will need to be maintained so that there is a constant source of information taking place enabling you to continue to tweak and optimize the brand as needed. It will be the hiring manager's job especially to see that job descriptions are kept up to date, along with the job competencies and expectations for each position and department. When this constantly modified and current information is combined with market research, it will enable your company to get an ongoing flow of top quality candidates. From this stream of the best candidates, you will be able to continue to find and hire the best – and they will be coming to you because they will want to work with your company.

Designing a **Powerful Employment Brand**

Here is an analogy of how this can work for you. Picture in your mind a lump of moldable clay being given to an expert sculptor. Then, imagine that the soft clay represents the total amount of information you have assembled concerning your open position. Next, you are going to direct the sculptor to create the ideal statue of an object that would most likely attract the kind of employee that you desperately want for the position. An example of how this might work for you would be, let's say you are looking to fill a nurse position. You recognize that you want one who is

deeply committed to nurturing and caring for other people. In this case, the sculptor could make a statue of Florence Nightingale or of a mother with a baby in her arms. Or, you might want to find a sport's doctor for your hospital. This would require the sculptor to make a muscular-looking athlete with a gold medal, or of someone playing a sport. The important thing here is that you need to see that the employment brand you build must appeal to the people you want to attract to your company.



Determine the Message of Your Current Employment Brand

Before you think about whether or not your company has been successful in the making of your employment brand, you may need to consider another aspect of it. After all, it is possible that your company has never even tried to create one.

If this is true, you need to be aware that your company already has an employment brand – whether you want it or not. It already exists in the minds of your employees, your staff, and it will also be there in the minds of your candidates, too. Your employment brand consists of the opinions that they all form about what it is like to work there, and of your company and its leadership.

When evaluating what your employment brand is currently like, you will need to be very honest and encourage your employees to be honest, too. Here is a small sampling of the type of questions you need to ask about your current employment brand.

- What's it like to work here? Is it a fun place to work, with plenty of opportunity and room for growth? Or, is it monotonous, high-stress, overly critical, unfair, and without even a possibility of rising vertically?
- Is there a reward system in place for employees when they meet learning, physical, or emotional challenges? Do they get rewarded with recognition, compensation,

or some other kind of reward?

- Is the workplace exciting, cutting edge, and pleasant, or is it just plain dull and boring?
- How is the organization performing on a day-to-day basis? Is it growing, expanding, or on a downward slope?
- Does your organization's leadership present a consistent message to develop a strong and unified employment brand, or is it one of confusion and uncertainty?
- After going through the interview process, how do new candidates feel? Are they confused, enthusiastic, depressed, or indifferent?

As you can see from these questions, each person that is in contact or interacts with your company will develop an opinion about your company. It does not take long to come to some kind of conclusion – even for candidates who may only briefly interact with a couple of your managers. They will base their opinion of your company on what they see and hear and feel. A good employment brand will be effective in that it will be able to inspire loyalty, pride, productivity, and a sense of community – and this will happen for both new employees and for your present ones.

The Three Main Ingredients of Powerful Brands

In order to develop a well-defined employment brand, it should include three dimensions. Monster.com's book entitled *Finding Keepers: The Monster Guide to Hiring and Holding the World's Best Employees*, clearly describes these three dimensions:

1. Functional Benefits. Tangible rewards of working at the employer: salary, healthcare, a clean, safe workplace, and a convenient location; for example: "XYZ Co. has great compensation and has a beautiful office near my home."

2. Emotional benefits. Intangible rewards: Mission, pride, status, job satisfaction, companionship/collegiality, belonging to a "winning team" and so on; for example: "I'm proud to work for XYZ Co. – my pals and I make the best widgets in the world."

3. Reasons to believe. Validation of the employer's claims; for example: "My friend says XYZ is a great place to work," and "The local news station calls XYZ a hot company for talented young people."

The bottom line of employment branding is that it is like art – it really is in the eye of the beholder. Using one type of employment branding will definitely attract one type of employee. Change it a little and you will attract a different kind. It really can be a powerful tool to get the type of employees you want.

The key to using employment branding effectively is to discover what kind you need to attract the type of employee you want. You will have to go through the process with each job opening you have. Like ordinary advertising, you will have to find out what kind of medium

to use that will be the most likely to be seen by and attract the customer that is most likely to buy your product. Every group of people has particular interests that they are attracted to. You will need to discover what those interests are, and then develop a compelling message around those interests that will enable them to see, hear, and feel them. By appealing to these senses, you will be able to reach them on an emotional level. This is very important because people will usually make decisions based on their emotions first, and afterwards they will try and find a logical reason to support it.

The employment brands that have proven to be the best will usually have a theme that is woven throughout all of their promotions. They will also show them consistently. The promotions need to be able to work well with just about any medium, which may include:

- A billboard near the company hiring
- A display at a career fair
- A career page on a website
- An ad on a job board
- An opportunity marketing piece
- A welcome package.

Obtaining the talent you want is all about appealing to all of their senses in order to reach their emotions.

Your corporate brand is constantly being impressed upon the minds of your employees. The same thing is happening in the minds of your new hires, which begin to feel its impact from the moment that they first hear your company's name, and will continue to feel its impress until they leave.

An employee brand should be looked at as your company's reputation, and you have one that is internal and one that is external. You will need to be sure that the message of your business is consistent with your company's messaging and promotions. Getting it to where it needs to be and keeping it there will require regular checking and upgrading.

Another very important aspect that must be considered when creating your employment brand is that it must be credible. Avoid statements that couldn't possibly be true – such as exaggerations or wishful thinking.

A successful employee brand that is going to draw top talent to your company will reach into as many senses as possible in your candidates. This needs to occur throughout the candidate process – during the introduction, the interviews, the offer stage, and on the start date.

It really is just like a sale that is backed up with consumer marketing. Employee branding really is no different than the marketing techniques you would use to market a product or service to a targeted group of people. In this case, your goal is to convince people that they need to come and work for you rather than your competitor.



Important Elements Needed to Build a Powerful Brand

While it is easy to talk about building a brand worth having, the truth is that you will not be able to build it overnight. There are several components involved, and they will all need to be worked on at the same time. The elements involved include everything that will affect your reputation, such as:

- Your company's culture
- Press reports - good and bad
- Word-of-mouth referrals
- Statements about your organization - internal and external
- Expectations about your company's future, and
- Your company's competitive position.

An employment brand, no matter how good it is, will only be of value to your candidates if they experience it. This means that it is subjective to their experience while they are going through the candidate process. Let's face it, if one receptionist gives them a hard time, or has an attitude problem – or if an interviewer is less than patient – or something else – it could ruin the whole experience. Other problems that may also ruin it could include:

- The ease or difficulty of using your company's website.
- Whether or not they could easily or at all apply online.
- The whole interview process and interactions with all who were involved.
- Their own impression of your company's products, services, promotions, etc.

As you can see, every bit of their contact with your company and employees, is part of your employee brand. Weak links can destroy it.

There is one more important thing to realize. Each candidate will consider their overall experience with your company through the hiring process with the way that they were treated at other companies before they came to yours. This means that your employer brand will be pitted against the employee brands of other companies, too.

If you have failed to provide adequate answers to their questions, or did not respond promptly, or did not make a strong positive impression, each failure, though not large by itself – contributes to the overall employee brand of your company. What may be worse is that the candidate may not even consider it consciously – but everything will have an effect.

