

Building an Employer Brand to Attract the Best Talent

Much has changed in our world since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and, while we endeavour to figure out what a new normal might look like, one aspect of attracting the best talent to our companies will remain timeless—the essential practice of building your brand as an employer. [Diane Homer](#) outlines key components to consider when developing an effective employer brand that will attract top talent.

Many organizations claim that their employees are the best, the brightest, the most qualified, or the ones who create the ultimate customer experience. It's hard to imagine how many bests there can be out there, but the hyperbole has its reasons. Employers that can attract the cream of the crop aren't afraid to let the marketplace know.

However, the plain fact is that workers aren't attracted to businesses just because they have the best products or the highest profits in their industry. That's not how it works. Firms that offer the most rewarding employee experience attract motivated and innovative individuals who go the extra mile, lure other high performers to the fold and, in turn, drive the fortunes of the business. That's where employer brand comes in.

What's your Employee Value Proposition?

Employer brand is quite different from corporate brand or product brand but there are similarities. It's an image that your current employees—as well as potential candidates—share believe about your firm organization. And that's what Employee Value Proposition (EVP) is all about. It's not a new concept—its origins date to the 1990s[i] but it's gained enormous prominence in recent times.

In essence, EVP comprises five components:

1. **compensation.** It's not just the dollar amount that counts, but what is critical is the "Total reward" available that are designed to align with the culture and performance metrics.
2. **benefits.** We tend to think narrowly of medical, dental and retirement, yet elements such as time off—both

vacation and unpaid sabbatical, family coverage and organization contribution are important.

3. **career path.** Here, the focus is on the long-term and includes learning, development and work experience, which translates into stability and career trajectory.
4. **work environment.** Beyond the physical aspects of the workplace are the job demands, work-life balance, flexibility, personal achievement and recognition.
5. **culture.** This encompasses relationships among colleagues and managers, expectations, team spirit, collaboration and client orientation.

Why does employer brand matter so much?

Employer brand is crucial because employees care about it. It's that simple. As employee advocacy has grown, so have the needs and aspirations of the workforce, including where, when and how they work—and ultimately who they work for. What's more, there's also a ripple effect . If you attract the best talent—and keep them happy—they'll stay, learn and develop and resist the urge to leave for new opportunities. They'll even become your best brand ambassadors.

Let's not forget, word travels fast in social media. When your employees become your ambassadors, the talent pipeline begins to flow with new and exceptional job applicants, fed by a following on LinkedIn, Glassdoor, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. That's when the effect on organizational performance kicks in, since motivated employees drive high performance through the entire organization, including customer experience, production efficiencies and revenue.

What do you want your employer brand to be?

Developing an employer brand starts with deciding what image you want your firm to project—in other words, what's your story?

Employer brands aren't just positive or negative—organizations need to recruit and retain people that fit their specific business model. Sure, some elements are common. Research repeatedly shows that most Canadians choose companies they trust. However, companies need to define what characteristics they want in their employees and these may vary by role within the organization itself. for example:

- do you want collaborators, coaches or cowboys?
- what does that mean for your culture?
- how do you want to be perceived in the employee market?

The answers to all of these questions need to be translated into your EVP.

Here's where organizational self-assessment comes in

Your company already has an employer reputation, whether you consciously pay attention to it or not. It's there to be examined if you ask your team members, and they're not sitting in your HR department. Employees who are leaving the organization along with talent acquisition will often give you the straight goods on how you're regarded in the competitive market place.

Then it's a matter of defining the gap and setting course to bring your organization in line with the employee experience you're trying to foster. That's no simple feat if the gap is large—there may be significant structural changes needed that must start at the top of your organization. Strategies you can invoke to achieve the EVP you need include —flexibility, mobility, responsibility, autonomy, collaboration, independence, compensation? You'll need a content strategy that speaks to the full range of employee demographic with sensitivity to gender, age, role and work environment.

Marketing your brand and your EVP

As noted, the tools used in corporate and product marketing are of limited value here. While some employer branding can be conveyed directly, such as those on your website;, social media is typically the main channel that candidates rely upon. And that's not easily scripted or managed—it is a digital word-of-mouth and is determined by your own employees believing and relaying the EVP you've tried to put in place. The recruiting process itself is also key. It has to feel personal, authentic and human at every stage. Here again, research indicates that most employees attach significant importance to the onboarding process in choosing an employer.

Future of work and your EVP

We talk about the future of work in terms of innovation, agility and collaboration—but these concepts aren't just corporate. They're also values held by my most employees, both current and prospective. There's every reason to believe that fostering the right employer brand is much more than keeping your people happy. It's really about the long-term success of your organization.

Recommended for you:

In a time of physical distancing, how does that affect your onboarding process? [Learn more.](#)

[i] Ambler, T. and Barrow, S. (1996). The employer brand. *Journal of Brand Management* 4, 185-206.

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