

Brand Identity Critical in Attracting Quality Talent

Every day there is yet another news story that mentions the critical shortage of workers in almost every industry, a shortage that has been fueled by fallout from the pandemic and by The Great Resignation. Consumers experience it as manufacturers struggle to keep-up with demand for products they need, but aren't seeing on the grocery shelves, and as they wait for a table in a half-empty restaurant because of a shortage of cooks, servers, or other hospitality staff.

As an employer, you may want to assume that no one wants to work anymore or that everyone is taking a job at Amazon for the high hourly pay rate. It is more complicated than that, however, and you may need to look in the mirror when determining the cause and how to meet the challenge.

Recent Bureau of Labor Statistics data shows a promising employment increase in many industries, including leisure and hospitality, manufacturing, transportation, construction, and professional and business services. The report also indicates that the number of people not in the labor force who currently want a job has increased since February of 2020.* So, you may be asking: "Well, if all of those people want a job and we have open jobs, what are they waiting for?" Do you have a mirror handy?

The desire for remote work, flexible hours, a safe work environment, a good cultural fit and better compensation can slow the process as today's job seekers weigh their options. However, an August 2021 survey conducted by SHRM (the Society for Human Resource Management) showed that 42% of respondents indicated that the top reason they have remained unemployed was that they were not receiving responses to jobs for which they have applied.



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Ghosting by employers has been an issue, and has put a dent in their brand image for decades. Spend time on LinkedIn, Twitter, Reddit, etc. and you will easily find and sense the exasperation, and even anger, from job seekers that feel disrespected by potential employers. A "best foot forward" approach is important for employers of all kinds.

Make no mistake, your employer brand IS your brand. Whether targeting a B2B customer, a consumer or a candidate, branding is about the three P's: Perception, Prejudice and Passion.

- How does your target audience perceive you?
- Do they prefer your company over your competitors?
- Are they so impressed with your company that they highly recommend you to others?

Your best customers are also your best candidates, and your candidates are, potentially, your customers. Every aspect of how you market your company, and interact with your target audience, impacts your ability to hire and to attract customers. If customers perceive you as great company to do business with, it is assumed that your company must be a great place to work. And if candidates perceive you as a great place to work, it is assumed that your company also provides a great customer experience.

Of course, the opposite is also true. A poor customer experience, or a poor candidate experience, can have a direct, negative impact on your brand image, your ability to hire and on your bottom line. Treat your candidates as you would your customers, as if your business depends on it. Because it does.

Steps to take:

Knowing and trusting the real estate brand is an important start. Using the brand will happen only when the audience recognizes its reputable attributes.



Develop a Recruitment Marketing focus. Designate a team, a person or an agency to tell your story, and to focus on the nuances of Recruitment Marketing and the candidate journey.



Do not make pay rate, sign-on bonuses, free iPhones, etc. the primary focus of your recruitment message. That may get you applicants and hires for the short-term, but many of those people will only stick around long enough to qualify for the bonus before jumping ship to the next company offering another deal.



Develop a plan and a budget. If you don't have a plan and a budget for recruitment marketing, build one. Because, as they say, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. If you have a budget for recruitment marketing, increase it. Because, most likely, it's woefully inadequate.



Focus on the 3 P's. Give job seekers a reason to be more receptive to your message, and enthusiastic about your company culture and your job opportunities.



Do not rely on an ATS alone. Despite their good intentions, many applicant tracking systems do a better job of *eliminating* potentially well-qualified candidates than they do at *identifying* potentially well-qualified candidates.



Look for transferable skills. A candidate that replied to a hotel housekeeper job may have the right personality for a hostess or customer service position.



Create a more efficient, streamlined candidate journey. If it takes too many clicks to find an application form that takes too long to complete, you will lose candidates. Remember that many candidates are applying using their smart phone and don't have access to a resume.



Communicate, communicate, communicate. Acknowledge receipt of the application, provide a way for candidates to track their application status, communicate the final decision, and provide a way for the candidate to get helpful feedback. Even when rejecting a candidate for employment, you can still gain appreciation and respect through effective communication.

By conducting an honest analysis of where you've been and where you want to be, in regard to recruitment and retention, you can create a more productive path for long-term success.

* BLS news release USDL-22-0015, January 7, 2022 ** Labor Shortage: The Disconnect and Possible Solutions. August 4, 2021
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