How to Tell Your Employer Brand Story to Future Talent

When telling your employer brand story, think of it as actually being a story! Your company is not just a list of products and benefits; it's a narrative of your history, your choices, and the culture you've created

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When you're looking for a new job, what draws you to a company? There are some obvious answers - the mission, the benefits, the location - but what about the employer brand story? (If your answer is, "*what's that?*" then this blog is definitely for you!) Employer brand was a hot topic of 2017, particularly among talent acquisition conferences like Indeed Interactive, Glassdoor, and Talent Connect, and will continue to be prevalent throughout 2018. So what is your employer brand? As defined by SHRM (the Society for Human Resource Management), it's how your organization communicates its identity, both internally and externally. It's what attracts talent to your company, what keeps your current employees engaged, and what 36% of job seekers have named their number one consideration in evaluating a potential new job. Employer brand also has a significant impact on your organization's overall reputation in the market - and it can impact your sales, particularly if your company sells consumer products. Just look at what happened to Virgin Media before they started making drastic overhauls to their flawed recruiting and hiring processes. In a "Rejected Candidate Survey," Virgin Media found that 18% of their rejected candidates were their own customers, and 6% actually switched to a competitor following a "poor recruitment process" - which lost Virgin Media 4.4 million pounds (roughly $6.1 million) in revenue. So yes, you could say employer brand is worth investing some time and effort into. Here's what you need to do:

Establish Ownership

One of the key problems most organizations face when evaluating their employer brand is agreeing on who owns the project. HR seems like the clearest answer - after all, they're the ones already in charge of recruiting talent and filling open positions. But while 58% of HR leaders say they are in fact responsible for employer branding, 60% of CEOs are claiming that responsibility for themselves. Of course, there's also an emerging argument for marketing to become more involved in developing the employer brand. Marketing already helps to build and promote the company's brand in the marketplace. But in a recent study from Hinge Research Institute, only 35.8% of talent-evaluators surveyed believed that marketing's role in employer branding involved "making our firm seem attractive to potential employees." The reality today is that employer brand development and management has become a cross-functional task. Potential candidates will not mentally separate your company's brand from the story they hear from HR. That means that to maintain a successful

employer brand, you need interdepartmental cooperation - and support from leadership to ensure consistency across the organization.

Understand Your Channels

It seems like every article today is about social media, but it truly is a driving, disruptive force for many more established facets of a business. Social media, and the internet, in general, offer an opportunity for you to share your brand more directly with your target audience - consumers and candidates alike - but they also open a door to public feedback on your brand from that same audience. After all, you can construct the most detailed brand possible in theory, but in reality, your brand is a reflection of every interaction between your company and your customers. If your customers' opinion of your company drops, so does your brand reputation. The same is true of your interactions with potential job candidates. From work-specific review sites like Glassdoor and Indeed to more general social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, there are countless opportunities online for your candidates to comment on - and influence! - your employer brand. And any potentially interested candidates stumbling upon those reviews are likely to be more influenced by stories from their peers than by what the "big corporation" is saying about itself. Two takeaways here: you should capitalize on the direct connection social media gives you to share your story with your potential talent, and you should also use these tools to regularly monitor the status of your employer brand from your audience's perspective. Spend some time looking at the problems candidates and customers share about your brand - and be honest with yourself and your team about which problems are real and need to be addressed.

Tell Your Story

The best way you can take back ownership of your employer brand is by telling your story, as much as you can, whenever you can. Sounds simple, right? And it is. Your employer brand is an amalgamation of every way that you can communicate who your company is. So your story needs to be consistent, it needs to be authentic - and it needs to stand out. The good news is, with so many repetitive, cliche brand stories out there, a little authenticity goes a long way. Everyone loves the beginning stories of hugely successful companies like Apple and Amazon - and that's not just because tech companies that started in a garage and now control the market have become so romanticized. The beginning is the part of a company's story that the average employee can relate to. It's also where you're likely to find the roots of the company's mission, the real reason the company was founded that *should* still permeate the organization in the present. If you're looking for success in that arena, take a page out of Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos's book and ensure that your mission and purpose are relentlessly articulated and followed through across your organization - and your employer brand. So when you're telling your employer brand story, think of it as actually being a story! Your company is not just a list of products and benefits; it's a narrative of your history, your choices, and the culture you've created. And that's a narrative you can take control of when you establish ownership, invest in your channels,

and communicate honestly. Know your story, and share it with your candidates. You'll like the results, trust me.

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