



## Want to Build a Successful Employer Branding Strategy? Link it to the Employee Experience

If your organization hasn't already worked to define and build a strong employer brand, it's time to put the task at, or very near, the top of your HR to-do list.

That's because defining and developing an attractive employer brand is one of the most important employee attraction and retention strategies your organization can embrace—and one that it may be neglecting.

That's not an indictment of your management and HR team, of course. An employer brand—best defined as the culture that makes your company attractive to existing and prospective employees—is something most organizations have, but few actively work to cultivate. This is a common challenge, largely due to the fact that organizations from the Fortune 500 to small and medium-sized businesses are only now beginning to understand employer branding as an organizational-wide concept.

Why care now? There are numerous reasons, but one of the primary drivers is financial. Companies large and small are on a constant search for new cost-saving measures. When CFOs finally began shining a brighter spotlight on the crippling costs of employee turnover in recent years, boardrooms became abuzz with questions over how to retain staff, slash recruitment costs

and avoid the spillover impact on productivity, morale and engagement. As a result, many employers are also starting to launch initiatives to track employee engagement through surveys and by monitoring reviews on websites such as [glassdoor.com](http://glassdoor.com) and [ratemyemployer.ca](http://ratemyemployer.ca), where they seek feedback with the primary purpose of helping them tweak everything from their operational policies to benefit plans to learning and development experiences designed to build capability in their teams.

Many found the engagement challenge to be more daunting than first thought. Consider that in its 2015 list of the Best Employers in Canada, HR consultancy Aon Hewitt found that engagement levels amongst the top 50 employers were a respectable 77 per cent. That number plummeted to just 58 per cent amongst the other 209 private- and public-sector organizations that

participated in the survey. That latter figure is stunning—nearly half of the businesses in this country have employees who are either moderately engaged, or completely disengaged, on the job.

There are countless reasons for this lack of engagement, from ineffective branding strategies to poorly-trained managers and lacklustre onboarding programs, to non-existent employee recognition strategies. Some organizations lack a connection between managers and their employees, creating a gap between those representing the business to the outside world and those at that top making the decisions. Other companies fail to communicate with their staff on a regular basis and therefore struggle to sell their employer value proposition every chance they get.

The good news: the problem is fixable if organizations make identifying and cultivating their employer brand—both internally and externally—a top priority. It starts by ensuring your employer brand is communicated in a way that properly reflects your culture. Not only will you fail to engage your workforce if the two aren't aligned, but selling a brand that isn't representative of the actual culture on the organization's offering is a sure fire way to attract the wrong people and fuel high employee turnover.

Next, ensure all of your current employees are experiencing your brand the right way. They are your ambassadors and should therefore be engaged in the mission, vision and values of the business. If properly motivated, employees can be your company's strongest advocates in communicating and validating your brand to potential candidates across the marketplace. Not sure where to start? Here are six ways to engage employees and enhance your employer brand internally:

- **Seek regular feedback**

Make employee feedback an ongoing habit by asking team members to explain what differentiates your organization's employer brand from that of competitors. This can be conducted in a cost-effective way using online survey tools such as Survey Monkey, or, budget permitting, by using an outsourced service-provider to collect and then analyze the data. Remember, guaranteeing anonymity is key to the process if you hope to obtain reliable information and gauge the true pulse of how employees feel the organization is representing the brand.

- **Brag about your benefits**

Be sure to communicate the benefits and career development resources that come with being a part of your team. People may forget what is available to them over time, so bring it to their attention with periodic information sessions or email communications. Some companies even develop websites or intranet sites that house this information in one central online location. This will help to ensure that any money you've invested in these resources/benefits/perks is fully utilized to help build your employer brand and the value proposition offered to employees.

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## Work to build your culture

Hold events or participate in community activities company-wide that resonate with your employees and help drive home your corporate culture. That could mean supporting charities or community organizations, organizing health and wellness-related activities, or regular team-building events.

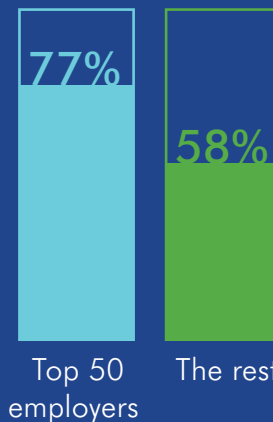
## Reward innovation

Engage employees by asking them for their ideas on ways to improve the business—either from a product or service delivery standpoint, or both. Programs like this can be organized in a multitude of ways including acknowledging the most innovative and relevant ideas with monthly or quarterly awards. This is a simple step that will not only remind staff just how much their input is valued, but one that can also help boost your bottom-line while increasing brand recognition in the marketplace as a place where ideas are valued and rewarded.

## Get your managers out of their offices

Too often we help organizations whose managers interact only occasionally with employees. Instead, managers should be immersed in the work environment and connecting with staff on a daily basis. Making managers accessible to employees can bring opportunities for greater learning and collaboration, while also helping employees develop a stronger connection to the organization and its culture.

## Engagement Challenge



\* Research based on 2015 list of the Best Employers in Canada

## Become a publisher

Launch periodic bulletins (online, in print, or both) that highlight the great work being done across your organization. A newsletter, e-blast or (budget depending) magazine-style publication can be used to provide recognition to high-performing employees, while fostering awareness of company developments and reinforcing the very best attributes of your brand.

The most important point to remember: building a strong employer brand isn't a once-off activity. It requires a strategic and sustained effort to reap the eventual rewards. But as we've witnessed in our work with dozens of organizations here at WHRC, it's one they never regret.

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