

HOW TO DEFINE AND COMMUNICATE YOUR EMPLOYER BRAND TO ATTRACT TOP TALENT



CPR-231117



The more attractive—and authentic—your employer brand is, the more you can attract qualified, interested applicants to your open roles and even convert candidates into company champions.

“Today’s talent invests a lot of time and energy before applying for a job, and they are researching your company anywhere they can find it,” explains Haley Sasser, digital marketing strategist on McKesson’s Talent Attraction team. “Many times, these touch points happen long before they’re looking for their next job, making it essential to make a good impression with the content you control.”

Effectively communicating your employer brand can improve the efficiency of your talent acquisition programs, especially in competitive talent and unstable economic markets. The stronger your employer brand is, the more money you can save by decreasing your time to fill roles with quality talent.

“Identifying and promoting things that differentiate you as an organization is critical in a competitive market,” says Marquis McCraw, VP of talent acquisition at Easterseals Southern California. “But this is true even in a market that isn’t competitive.”

This two-part guide will explore ways to express your employer brand creatively.



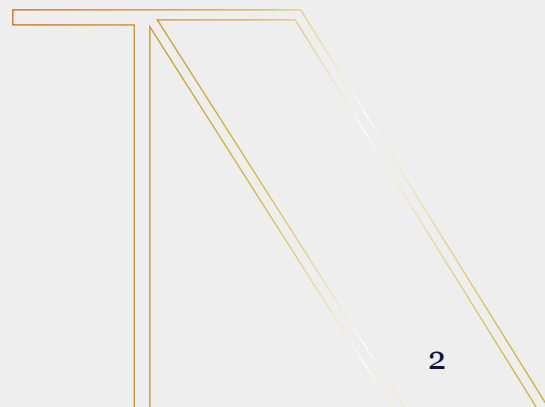
HALEY SASSER

Digital marketing strategist on McKesson’s Talent Attraction team



MARQUIS
MCCRAW

VP of talent acquisition at Easterseals Southern California



Part I - Defining Your Employer Brand

“The definition of an employer brand is what an individual perceives it’d be like to work at your company,” explains Sasser. “And whether you’re aware of your employer brand or not, you have one.” So you’re better off intentionally defining (or refining) one. Begin by focusing on these four elements.

KNOW YOUR EMPLOYEE VALUE PROPOSITION.

Your employee value proposition (EVP) is your organization’s answer to the question, “Why work at this company?” McCraw notes that your EVP should accurately communicate to external candidates what they can expect internally if they come on as employees. McCraw says that if there’s a disconnect between an EVP and the actual employee experience, that’s when turnover happens. Avoid attrition by keeping your EVP authentic.

INVITE TALENT TO BE A PART OF YOUR MISSION.

Talent can be attracted by what it’s like to work at a company—but also by the work a company does. It’s crucial to be clear about your company’s purpose and answer: “Why do we do what we do?” When you’re clear, you’ll attract the candidates who most passionately want to help you achieve your mission.

What brand does it well?



Its careers page¹ has numerous examples of what it’s like to work at Canva, from flexible work styles to skills building to a focus on diversity and inclusion, with one employee sharing, “Now I’m proud to say, hey Ramadan is coming.” And the effort appears to be working: 87% of employees would recommend working at Canva to a friend on Glassdoor, and the company was named the #1 Best Workplace for Innovators by Fast Company.²

What brand does it well?



The financial company is “on a mission to get more money in the hands of women.” Its careers page³ invites candidates to join that mission upfront. That focus on purpose has helped Ellevest’s NYC office earn a 4.6/5 rating on Glassdoor.

UNDERSTAND YOUR VALUES.

Your organizational values are reflected in how your employees work together to achieve your mutual mission. But it's important to recognize that your leadership team doesn't dictate your organization's values in a vacuum. Your stated values must match how your employees really approach their work each day if they're going to represent your organization authentically.

McCraw and his team at Easterseals Southern California are undergoing an employer brand refresh to ensure their values are accurately represented. "Whenever you do a brand refresh, it's not a quick thing, a quick overlay. It's like painting a house. You have to prime it well before you even put the paint on," explains McCraw. Thus far, they have conducted a value survey and held listening sessions with employees to ensure that executives' views of the organization's values aligned with what team members believed.

What brand does it well?



On its careers page,⁴ you'll find a 128-slide culture code that lays out the company's HEART values (humble, empathetic, adaptable, remarkable and transparent) and more. Because, as HubSpot says, it's "building a culture where personal and professional growth are just as important as business growth." In 2022, HubSpot was #48 on Fortune's list⁵ of the 100 best companies to work for, and 91% of employees say it's a great place to work.⁶



COLLABORATE WITH FELLOW STAKEHOLDERS.

Create an authentic and cohesive employer brand by involving your whole organization. You'll want to allow employees to help build your employer brand, and you'll want to make your marketing team part of the process—or risk missing some pieces crucial to brand alignment, says McCraw.

You'll also want to involve PR and fellow senior leaders to ensure media, thought leadership and executives' personal stories are consistent. And within the HR team, you'll want to survey or hold focus groups with recruiters. "Ask how they are currently 'selling' the company," suggests Sasser. "They have a wealth of knowledge about your organization from which you can draw some clear themes."

Did you know?

96% of companies think employer branding and reputation positively or negatively impact revenue streams.⁷

94% of candidates are more likely to apply for a job if a company actively manages its employer brand.⁸

Companies with a strong employer brand have a **28% lower** turnover rate than those with a weaker one.⁹





Part II - Communicating Your Employer Brand

“Your employer brand is the external marketing side of the employee experience,” explains Sasser. “You want prospective talent to see what your company is all about for them to mentally opt in to the idea of being an employee.”

“But you also don’t want every applicant applying for your job,” she adds. “It’s OK if they opt out. You want the people who will see your employer brand and think, ‘Yes, this is for me,’ and apply.”

Attract the right talent by keeping these six brand elements in mind.

PICK YOUR TONE.

Your tone is how your messaging sounds to candidates and employees. Think of it like personality or character traits (e.g., collaborative, humble).

To Sasser, the right tone depends on the talent you hope to hire and attract and will vary by industry and hiring goals. But above all, “authenticity and honesty matter the most in tone,” she says. “And steer away from corporate jargon¹⁰ whenever you can.”

What brand does it well?

The Eventbrite logo is displayed in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font. The word "eventbrite" is written in a vibrant orange-red color. The letters are closely spaced, and the overall style is clean and modern.

When you read and look through its careers page,¹¹ a few words come to mind: Empowering. Welcoming. Friendly. Inclusive. The tone is clear, and it will attract candidates attracted to these qualities. Eventbrite is a certified Great Place to Work, thanks to the ratings by 93% of its employees.¹²

CREATE YOUR IDENTITY.

Where tone is about your brand voice, identity is about your brand visuals. Start by getting close with your corporate marketing team, says Sasser. “It’s essential to know your corporate brand guidelines, inside and out, so you’re not violating any of the rules they’ve set up,” she explains. “And then you can create a more personable and human employer brand identity.”

While you’ll have some guidelines, there’s plenty of room to be creative about your brand identity. McKesson, where Sasser works, uses a different accent color (lime green)¹³ and a specific design element (a ribbon)¹⁴ across prospect-facing content to differentiate it from the corporate brand.

When it comes to photography, be mindful of the photos you use. Brands might be tempted to use real employee photos, but this can also become a burden if employees leave and careers pages are filled with people no longer at the company. If you use stock photos, show diverse groups. As McCraw points out, “Talent is attracted to talent that looks like them.”



TELL A STORY ABOUT YOUR COMPANY.

Paint a picture for candidates about what it's like to be an employee at your company. Share moments that are important to your company, such as heritage months, annual company events and community service days, suggest Sasser. Also, consider sharing about how your company gives back. “Candidates, especially Gen Z, are very conscious about the planet and giving back, making it a great topic to lean on for storytelling,” says Sasser.

Sharing stories is also another opportunity to get your employees on board. McCraw suggests reviewing your employee referral programs or even hosting contests for a slogan to get employees engaged and involved.

What brand does it well?



DocuSign has an entire landing page dedicated to its environmental commitments¹⁵ as part of its careers page. The landing page describes the impact of DocuSign's sustainable philanthropy and what employees would be a part of. DocuSign was also named a Best Place to Work by Glassdoor in 2021 and 2022.¹⁶

GO ONE STEP FURTHER WITH EMPLOYEE ADVOCACY.

“Employee advocacy is a huge topic right now because people trust people, not brands, and employees can make or break your employer’s brand,” explains Sasser. She suggests finding happy, engaged employees who are already excited about working at your company (i.e., they post to LinkedIn all the time, attend company events and are active in your employee resource groups) and leaning on them to create content showing their authentic experiences, whether that’s videos, images or blog posts.

Sasser suggests giving employees solid examples and ideas to share. Better yet, consider a digital tool such as Sprout Social or GaggleAMP that makes it easy for employees to log in and share social posts with approved messaging from the company to their networks in one click. (Check with your corporate marketing team, who might already have access to a tool like this.)

The same goes for executives! Encourage your fellow leaders to share their experiences and echo the culture you want to be known for. This process could involve execs giving a team member¹⁷ a shoutout or posting on LinkedIn about the culture¹⁸ they are nurturing.

What brand does it well?



On the “Adobe Life”¹⁹ page, you’ll find countless employee blog posts that, as the brand puts it, “use the power of storytelling to help build empathy, strengthen inclusion, and expand perspectives.” The page features stories from employees who immigrated to the United States, employees who beat cancer, women who broke through the glass ceiling, and more. Their stories are inspiring and could be part of why Adobe has been named to the “Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For” list for the past 23 years.



KNOW WHAT EMPLOYEES SAY ABOUT YOUR BRAND.

Assess how current (and past) employees talk about your brand, from online reviews to social posts. “Tap whoever is in your marketing or talent acquisition team that’s in charge of Glassdoor, Indeed and reputation management and have monthly or quarterly meetings to present the latest findings of what’s out there,” suggests Sasser.

How do you boost reviews? Part of Sasser’s suggested strategy is to contact recently promoted team members and send an email saying something like, “Hey, congrats again on your promotion. If you haven’t left us a review on Glassdoor, now would be a great time!” She adds to remember never to ask for a five-star review—remind employees that these platforms are anonymous, and only ask for honest feedback.



SHARE YOUR EMPLOYER BRAND.

Your employer brand extends far beyond your careers page. From social media to job descriptions to career fairs, there are many places where you'll need to communicate what it's like to work at your organization. When it comes to social media, "LinkedIn, Glassdoor and Indeed are the major players," says Sasser. "But smaller platforms also do a great job promoting employer brands, like The Muse and Fairygodboss." Be sure to assess the social media profiles of C-suite executives to make sure any copy about the company reflects your organization's current messaging.

For companies in the retail sector or with hourly workers, Sasser suggests having a presence in the real world to attract talent on the ground. She shared one example from DSW, which had a job posting at a store demonstrating its commitment to inclusion, equity, diversity and belonging.

Another real-world tip is providing employees with swag so they're promoting your brand wherever they go, suggests McCraw. His final advice: "Know where all your collateral is around your employer brand, and make sure all that stays updated."

What brand does it well?



The Home Depot excels at sharing employee stories²⁰ and key company moments on social media. It won for Best Company Work-Life Balance²¹ in 2021 and 2023, while also in 2023, it was recognized on Forbes' list of the World's Best Employers.²²

A Final Note

Once you've nailed down your employer brand, own it. Not everyone will love it, and that's the point. You want an organization of employees who've all opted in to the employee experience. When you've done that, do what you can as a leader to ensure the messaging stays true to the experience. Take your own advice and share. Seek out those natural promoters in the company. Share your ideas and empower others to do the same. And hold yourself—and fellow leaders—accountable for keeping your brand authentic.



End Notes

1. Belong at Canva, 2023. Canva.

<https://www.lifeatcanva.com/en/canva-life/belong-at-canva/>

2. Canva Named #1 Best Workplace for Innovators by Fast Company, 2023. Canva.

<https://www.canva.com/newsroom/news/fast-company-workplaces-for-innovators/#>

3. Join Ellevest, 2023. Ellevest. <https://www.ellevest.com/careers>

4. Let's Grow Together, 2023. HubSpot. <https://www.hubspot.com/careers>

5. 100 Best Companies to Work For, 2023. Fortune.

<https://fortune.com/company/hubspot/best-companies/>

6. HubSpot Company Overview, 2022. Great Place to Work.

<https://www.greatplacetowork.com/certified-company/1298970>

7. 29 Surprising Stats on Employer Branding—Infographic, 2023. Career Arc.

<https://www.careerarc.com/blog/2017/11/employer-branding-study-infographic/>

8. Employer Branding 2023: The Path to Success, 2023. Rao, S.

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/employer-branding-2023-path-success-sanjay-rao/>

9. Why Your Employer Brand Matters, 2012. LinkedIn.

https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/business/talent-solutions/global/en_US/site/pdf/datasheets/linkedin-why-your-employer-brand-matters-en-us.pdf

10. Business Jargon: Less Is More for a Win-Win Situation, 2021. Gurchiek, K.

<https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/business-jargon-less-win-win-situation>

11. You're Invited to a Mission That Matters, 2023. Eventbrite.
<https://www.eventbritecareers.com/home>

12. Eventbrite Company Overview, 2022. Great Place to Work.
<https://www.greatplacetowork.com/certified-company/1281692>

13. Culture and Values, 2023. McKesson.
<https://careers.mckesson.com/en/culture-and-values>

14. Best Employment Website 2023, 2023. WebAwards. <https://www.webaward.org/winner/37052/radancy-wins-2023-webaward-for-mckesson-careers-site.html>

15. Product with purpose, 2023. DocuSign. <https://careers.docusign.com/sustainability>

16. DocuSign Ranks in Glassdoor's Top 100 Best Places to Work, 2022. DocuSign
<https://www.docusign.com/blog/glassdoor-top-100-best-places-work>

17. LinkedIn post, 2023. Smith, M.
<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7123010753489457152/>

18. LinkedIn post, 2023. Poepsel, M. https://www.linkedin.com/posts/mattpoepsel_leadership-productivity-creativity-activity-7109888055389343744-LFHX/

19. Adobe For All: My Story, 2023. Adobe. <https://www.adobe.com/diversity/my-story.html>

20. The Home Depot Careers, 2023. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/homedepotcareers>

21. Home Depot Awards, 2023. Comparably. <https://www.comparably.com/companies/the-home-depot/awards#:~:text=The%20Home%20Depot%20won%201,satisfied%20with%20their%20work%20experience>

22. The Home Depot Recognized on Forbes' World's Best Employers List of 2023, 2023. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/lists/worlds-best-employers/>



®

**EXECUTIVE
NETWORK**