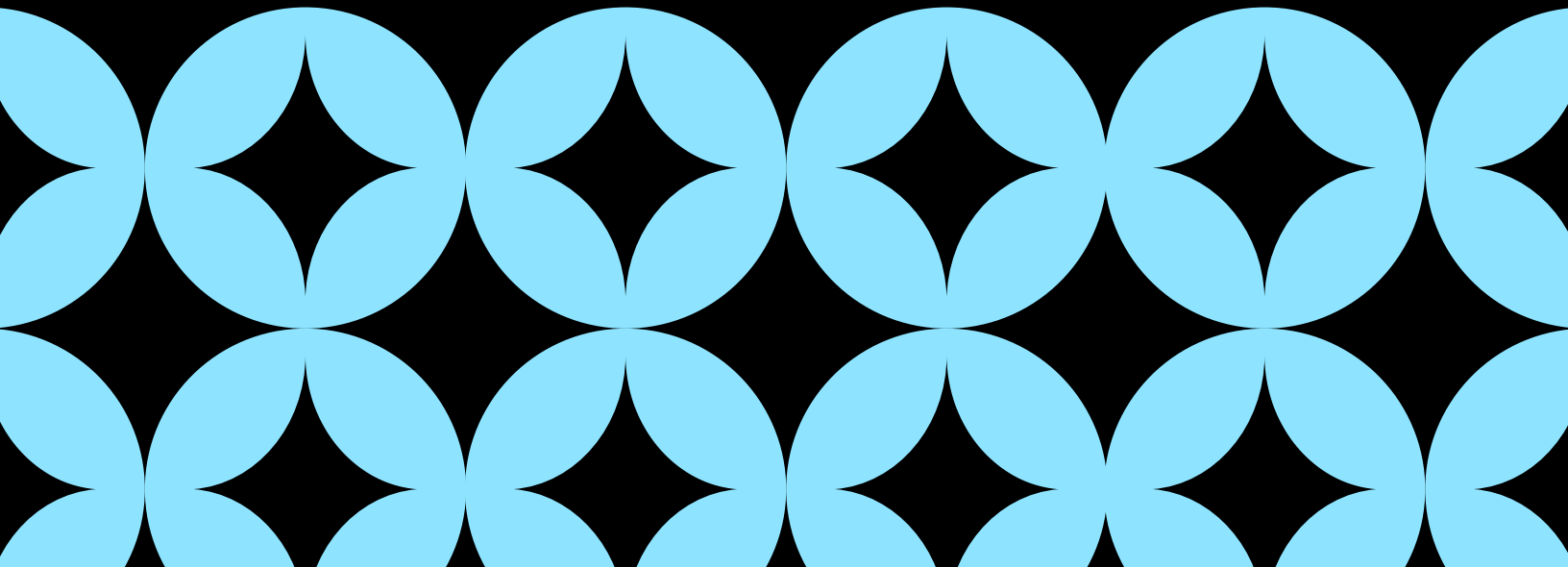


The high-impact B2B employer brand

Are you making the most of this essential lever for retaining hard-to-keep employees and attracting the hard-to-hire?

Read this PJA paper to learn more about

- How to build an employer brand that drives real impact
- Transforming internal & external perceptions with meaningful messaging
- Activating employer brand to drive measurable retention & hiring results



B2B companies are paying more attention to employer brand, but are they getting more out of it?

49% of employers rate their employer brand as “lousy” or “fair.”¹ It’s not hard to see why. Often, they’re settling for undifferentiated messaging that doesn’t set them apart from competing employers and doesn’t connect to the most important priorities of current and prospective employees. And many companies are failing to activate their employer brand – not really using it to drive concrete results and cost savings that matter.

The strategic priority is clear

For too long, B2B companies tended to overlook employer brand or silo it as an “HR thing.” But employers in tough hiring environments are waking up to it as a strategic must-have. In fact, 77% of businesses say employer branding is a crucial element in their overall business strategy.² That’s because it can drive real business advantages by increasing employee retention and attracting new hires.

The costs of a missed employer brand opportunity

Like many in B2B, you’re probably in a highly competitive hiring environment, where it’s more and more difficult to attract and retain valuable staff. Weak employer brands make that even harder to do – and more expensive. Companies with strong employer brands reduce employee turnover by 28%³ and decrease their cost per hire by 43%.⁴ If you’re not one of them, you’re losing specialized, high-value employees you’ve invested a lot in acquiring and training. And spending more to bring in the new talent you need for your company to grow and innovate.

Strong employer brands reduce employee turnover by 28%³ and cut cost per hire by 43%⁴

It's time to demand more from your employer brand

With benefits and costs like these at stake, it's smart to ask if you're getting enough out of your employer brand. This strategic asset should be driving impact that matters to your business – and to do so, it needs two key ingredients: a high-impact story and high-impact activation.

A high-impact story that's truly distinctive and compelling

Take a close look at typical employer brand messaging, and you'll see a lot of the same ideas. True but tired statements that sound like they could come from most of the companies in your category – because they do. And often, these ideas fail to connect to what your current and prospective employees really care about. It doesn't have to be that way.

Focus on the meaningful and motivating

For most of us, where we work is core to our sense of personal identity. To get to employer brand messaging with high impact, focus on what's truly powerful and meaningful to your most valued employees and candidates. These messages live in the territories of beliefs, emotions, and values. Those can be stronger motivators than your company's size and market position, and a potent ingredient alongside basics like competitive pay, benefits, and flexibility. And they make for messaging with more power to grab attention and connect to deeply held ideas.

Three quarters of businesses say employer brand is crucial, but half rate theirs as just “fair” – or worse.⁴



80%
of employers believe they
effectively communicate
about culture, but
only 30%
of candidates agree.⁵

Mine the gems in your mission and culture

If your company has a strong sense of purpose, that's a great place to look for ideas that can drive meaningful employee brand messaging. Despite 80% of employers believing they effectively convey their company culture, only 30% of candidates share the same perception.⁵ Mine your culture, values, mission and vision for what's truly powerful and distinctive to employees (not the tired "integrity" and "customer-focused" statements everybody uses). Embedding those cultural gemstones in your employer brand messaging can make it resonate – and help you drive the cultural alignment with current and prospective employees that's so necessary for innovation-driven companies.

Connect to your company brand

While mission is a potent source of inspiration, too many HR decision-makers tend to focus only on internal culture and values when they're thinking about employer brand – and not enough on what makes the company distinctive from a market perspective. When your message to the market is about driving change that matters (what we at PJA call "What are you fighting for?"), that can really motivate and give a sense of purpose to employees, as well as create more opportunity for employer brand differentiation.

Don't settle for imitation

Meaningful and aligned with company culture and brand aren't enough – your employer brand story also needs to be distinctive in order to cut through and connect with the highly-qualified talent who see opportunities in their inboxes all the time. Be ruthlessly critical as you work on your messaging – are you settling for tired truths you'll find on the Careers pages of most of your competitors?

For example: "improving lives" is a noble pursuit and a strong motivator for professionals in life sciences and biopharma, but it has been so overused it has lost much of its power to help companies in those industries compete for talent. For one of our growing biopharma clients in the rare disease space, a better approach was to talk about offering "a rare opportunity to build a career, a company and a brighter future."

High-impact activation that makes employer brand relevant and unignorable

A great employer brand story won't deliver impact on its own – you need to make it reach and engage its target audience. Too many B2B companies fail to invest in programs that bring their employer brands to life internally and externally. But you can commit to making your employer brand unignorable for employees and prospective hires.

Skip the stale internal comms tactics

Your existing employee base is a target audience like any other – busy, distracted, blustered by too many communications. To make your employer brand stick, engage your employees on a journey that truly earns their attention and changes their understanding and behavior. Think bold, inspiring, interruptive – a campaign tuned to the channels, voices, content, and experiences that connect to your employees.

Establish your employer brand with hot talent

Your employer brand is your most powerful tool for building awareness and increasing consideration among new, high-value hires – but only if they know about it. That won't happen if you're only running recruiting campaigns for specific roles in specific geographies. It takes a commitment to making your employer brand visible to the broad talent markets where hiring is most critical for you – in turn making all your recruiting efforts more successful. Bring your employer brand story to life with message-driven creative for the right media channels, while adding a layer of deeper content and experiences (in social media, on your careers page, at hiring events, in the interview process) that get the right prospects to lean in and engage with what sets you apart.

Employee Engagement Journey

Your employer brand deserves an internal campaign that takes your employees on a journey from attention to understanding and behavior change.



Building your new employer brand

Developing a high-impact employer brand isn't always easy, but it's always worth the effort. These best practices and tips will help you seize the opportunity.

1

RESEARCH

Find out what really matters

You've got a great resource for firsthand insight that can inspire high-impact messaging: your current employees.

- Use surveys or listening sessions to find out why they came, why they stay, what inspires them about your mission and culture, why they chose this industry.
- Segment responses from your most recent hires to get a good read on what prospective candidates care about.
- Use these insights to get beyond obvious, transactional ideas to emotional, relational truths with the power to inspire your current and potential employees.

2

STORY

Connect to what's in it for them

An awful lot of employer brand messaging feels like it's the company talking to itself instead of communicating to talent.

- Think outside-in – make sure you're speaking clearly to employees and potential hires about how your workplace connects to their priorities, values, and aspirations.
- Don't be afraid to take a stand for what you offer and what you don't – effective employer brand messaging won't just attract the right people; it'll also help deter the wrong people.
- Take a hard look at your competitors' employer brand messages to find the sweet spots where you can be distinctive in a crowded market.

Watch out for these pitfalls

It's too easy to miss out on the powerful advantages of a high-impact B2B employer brand.

Story pitfalls

- Leaning on tired category truths
- Restating company brand messages
- Not pulling in strategic internal stakeholders

Activation pitfalls

- Settling for stale internal or external communications
- Confusing recruitment campaigns with employer branding
- Rolling out with a splash and then forgetting about it

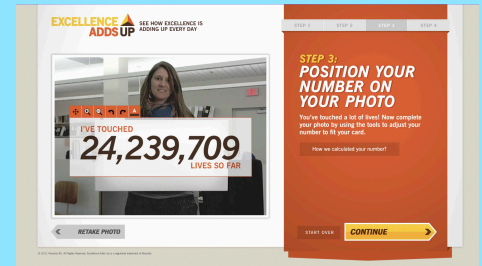
3

ACTIVATION

Drive real impact inside and out

- Mine your employer brand story for inspired activation opportunities, focused on original ideas tuned to the distinctiveness of your message and the priorities of your current and prospective employees.
- Challenge the internal comms and recruitment campaign status quo with unexpected, break-through tactics – like guerrilla environmental placements, mobile for employees without desks, unforgettable giveaways for prospects in the interview process, and physical experiences at recruitment events.
- Leverage your employees' authentic voices. 86% of candidates say they value stories from employees and that this content influences their job search.⁶ Showcase voices across the organization, at multiple levels, and let them speak naturally from the heart.

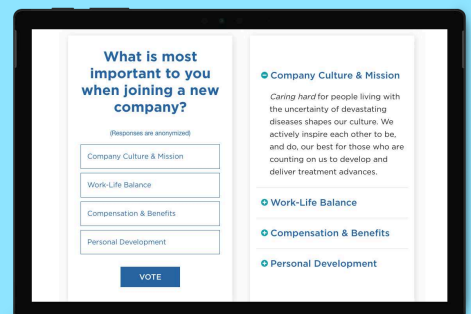
ACTIVATION EXAMPLES



Giving employees a physical experience is a powerful way to engage them. This hallway virtual experience helped personalize the individual's contribution to company impact.



Employees will run with a good idea if it's truly engaging. This internal activation inspired staff worldwide to get creative sharing photos of how "we're in it."



How can you get hiring prospects to lean in? This poll on a recruiting landing page gave candidates a chance to say what matters most to them – and see how others are voting.

By outlining these insights and recommendations, we've tried to share what we've learned from our experience helping clients develop and implement employer brands. In that spirit, we're happy to show you examples relevant to your industry and talk through your specific challenges. You deserve a high-impact employer brand. Let's get started.

For more insights from the creative thinkers at PJA, visit www.agencypja.com or reach out to Greg Straface at gstraface@agencypja.com

1 (2024, Gitnux) <https://gitnux.org/employer-branding-statistics/>
2 (2024, Gitnux) <https://gitnux.org/employer-branding-statistics/>
3 (2024, Gitnux) <https://gitnux.org/employer-branding-statistics/>
4 (2024, Gitnux) <https://gitnux.org/employer-branding-statistics/>
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At PJA, we help you sell your amazing things to the world's toughest buyers.



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