

MODERNIZE to move forward

EMPLOYMENT BRANDING 2022





From John Wilson, CEO

If I had to describe the last 12 months in one word, it's "change." We've seen more change in the last year than many of us have seen in a lifetime. The way we work hasn't just changed; it's completely transformed. It's had a huge impact on the employment landscape. Pre-pandemic, the talent market was constrained, and many companies were already grappling with skills shortages. But now, severe skills shortages aren't just reserved for certain industries. All sectors are experiencing skills shortages – including recruitment. I know all too well the challenges employers are facing. Skills shortages combined with rising inflation, changing candidate and employee expectations and a record number of job openings are taxing talent acquisition teams.



I've long talked about the importance of a robust employment branding strategy, but I can't express how important it is in today's climate. Companies must differentiate from their hiring competition, and a solid employment brand is critical. Just as the times have changed, so has our award-winning employment brand report. Because more than 90% of businesses are small and medium enterprises, we decided to widen our analysis to include these organizations. The results have shown us that it's not just the Fortune 500 that excel at employment branding. Smaller companies are holding their own and often find themselves competing for the same talent.

The companies that excel in employment branding all have one thing in common, regardless of size. They understand the need to put humans first. If you treat people well and have an employment brand that truly aligns to your employee experience, you'll find it a lot easier to attract and retain the talent you need to grow your business. My hope is that this report will help you on your journey to positioning your company as an employer of choice.

It's a talent driven market

Record job vacancies, global skills shortages, high turnover rates, changing candidate and employee expectations and high inflation are all having an impact – simultaneously. The last two years have consisted of one historical event after another that resulted in a talent market like no other.

Because of the constant change, the solutions to the employer brand challenges we all faced felt more like reactive fixes than long-term, strategic solutions. Fortunately, things are starting to look up. Many companies are putting a renewed focus on their employee value propositions (EVPs), improving working conditions, increasing compensation and emphasizing workplace health and well-being.

With people as the focus, the path forward to a modern employment brand has become clear.

modern employment brand

['mädərn əm'ploimənt brand]

(noun)

proving through action, not just words, that a person's workplace supports their mental, physical and financial well-being

Candidate mindset is shifting

It's important to note that the fundamentals of employment branding haven't changed, but the psychology and behavior of jobseekers have. Their priorities have shifted. The pandemic gave people the chance to reflect on their lives and re-evaluate what's important to them. If employers want to successfully position as an employer of choice, they not only need to understand what candidates want from a job, but they must also live it. Your employee experience, which has likely evolved over the past couple years, must align with your employment brand. Much has changed over the past 12 months, including the way people consume content, which means it's time for companies to modernize their employment brands and engage with candidates where they are.

Demand is outpacing supply

A lot of companies are in the process of expanding their workforces, so demand for talent is high; it's far surpassing supply. Total employment in the US is projected to reach 165.4 million over the 2020–30 decade, an increase of 11.9 million jobs, according to the [US Bureau of Labor Statistics](#). Demand for contingent talent has also increased (80% of large corporations in the US plan to increase their use of a flexible workforce in the coming years, research from [Intuit found](#)), which means employment brands must appeal to all segments of workers. More organizations are taking a total talent approach to talent acquisition, and rightly so. However, many are not taking this approach with employment brand. This needs to change.

9/10
executives and
managers say their
companies already face
skills gaps or expect gaps
to develop within the next
five years, according to
a global survey from
[McKinsey](#).

6 things people ^{REALLY} want from their employers

01

Flexibility in ALL things work-related

Flexibility at work isn't just about working remotely, although that's often a popular request. People want to choose working hours that fit around their lives, whether that's four 10-hour working days or the flexibility to work hours outside the typical 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. In a recent [survey](#), 81% of respondents said the top reason they want flexible jobs is to improve their work-life balance, while 70% said working virtually would improve their mental health.

02

A real work-life balance

Work-life balance is continually cited as a top-five priority for employees. However, many employers think that if they implement a remote working policy, employees will automatically have a better work-life balance. It doesn't work like that. Employees at remote-friendly companies are [32%](#) more likely to say they struggle with work-life balance. Employers, therefore, need to ensure their workforce has clear boundaries in place between work and home life. Burnout is real: [41%](#) of workers feel burnt out from work, so it's important to put measures in place to address it. Well-being programs can help and managers need to be aware of the signs of burnout, so they can step in to help team members who are feeling overwhelmed.

03

To be able to further their careers

The ability to learn and develop has become a key driver for people considering new roles. So much so that [37%](#) of candidates said they'd be willing to take a pay cut for a chance to learn new skills. Further, the same percentage said that upskilling opportunities are the most important factor when considering a new role, after compensation and benefits. Comprehensive L&D programs play an important role in internal mobility; they help decrease time to hire and reduce recruitment costs. Because internal candidates already know what to expect from their organization, employee satisfaction and retention levels remain high.

To truly belong

Employees want to feel a sense of belonging in the workplace: [62%](#) of jobseekers said they would be more likely to apply for a job if a company is openly committed to improving diversity and inclusion within their workforce. The most important part is how you operationalize it though. Employees and candidates will see right through it if what you say doesn't align with what you do. Create a culture that encourages all employees to bring their true selves to work. You can do this by including employees of all levels together in your planning, processes and programs. This provides them with the opportunity to have their say. Simply put, everyone's voice should be heard.

04



Read more about how diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging is a mindset, not an initiative, in this [whitepaper](#).

The ability to positively impact society

It is no longer acceptable for companies just to make money; [88%](#) of employees said companies must positively impact society as well. What does this mean for employers trying to attract and retain talent? It means you must be vocal about where you stand on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental, social and governance (ESG) efforts. Let your employees guide what causes you get involved in as passion fuels participation. And document the progress you're making clearly too so candidates can see it's a long-term commitment you've made to make the world a better place.

05

Be part of a company that really cares

Well-being was ranked a top workforce trend by [80%](#) of respondents in a recent study. While there are many outlets for well-being, such as virtual exercise sessions, money management webinars or healthy eating contests, the most important thing is for employers to practice empathy. Training leaders to operate with understanding and compassion will positively impact culture and improve retention. After all, employees are humans first and want to be treated with respect.

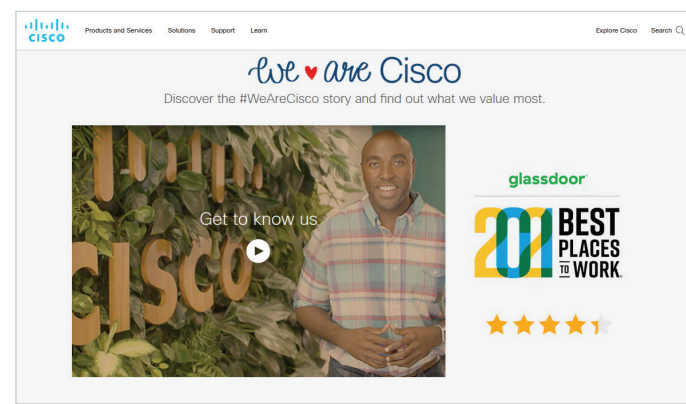
06

Breathe life into your brand through your people

Effective recruitment marketing is no longer about documenting the past with heavily curated content. Instead, companies that live in the moment and let their brands speak through their people are the ones that get noticed. Let employees do the talking on the platforms that matter most to them. By encouraging people to authentically share their career stories, companies bring their employment brands to life. And the enthusiasm to share becomes contagious – not just among the employees sharing their experiences, but the candidates who want to be a part of it. Put simply, recruitment marketing efforts should stop people in their tracks and lead them to take action, whether it's to join your talent community or apply for a job.

What does scroll-stopping recruitment marketing look like?

Cisco stood out for its ability to humanize its recruitment marketing content; it lets employees tell their career stories. Given that candidates trust the voice of employees 3x more than CEOs, this is a game-changer. When companies, like Cisco, give their employees a voice, they are communicating at a deeper level that they put people above all else.



The power of employee voice

In the example below, a Cisco employee talks about how they appreciate the work-life balance at the company. The post evokes emotion, especially for parents or caregivers trying to find a healthy work-life balance. This is critical today



when you consider 57% of respondents in a recent survey said a lack of healthy work-life boundaries would prevent them from applying or accepting a job and even influence them to quit.

What does the research tell us about employee blog content?

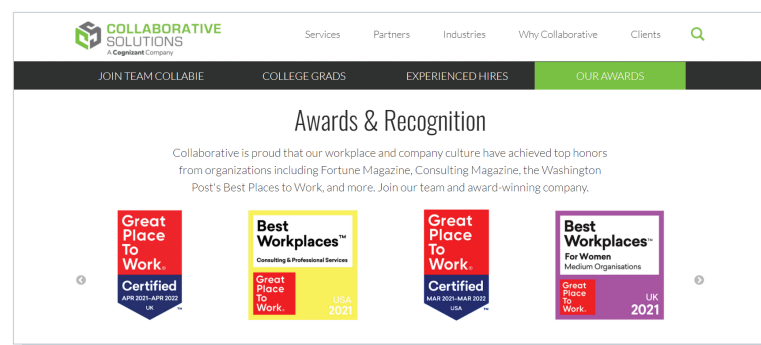
Employee-authored blog posts showcase company culture. And, because they're written by employees rather than marketing teams, they come across as more authentic. Each employee has a unique voice and their own story to tell. Interestingly, small and medium-sized organizations are the most likely to feature employee-authored blog content, which is no doubt because larger companies have more of a hold on their branding guidelines and, therefore, more control of blog content.

Validate your employment brand

Accolades can help differentiate one company from another. Awards provide third-party validation, so we were surprised that companies still aren't taking advantage of an easy win. Employers should place details of award wins prominently throughout their career sites. It's not wishful thinking to say an award could be the reason why a candidate chooses your company over another; it's fact.

In it together

Collaborative Solutions describes itself as award-winning (a lot of companies do) but backs its claims by showing a selection of the honors it has received on its career site. The third-party validation goes a long way. The awards on display are mostly



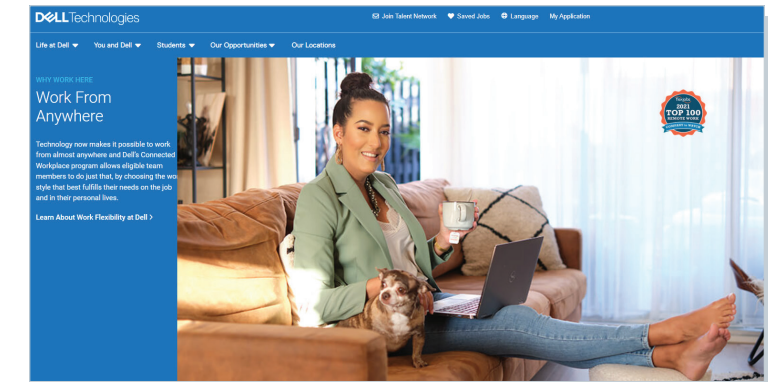
related to the company being a great place to work – a natural choice when trying to promote yourself as an employer of

choice. It includes a variety of employer awards for diversity and its learning and development program. The company knows what appeals to candidates as both topics are key drivers for today's jobseekers.

Award-winning flexibility

Dell Technologies draws attention to its accolades with strategically placed award logos throughout its career site. The company has details of its flexible working program on its career page and a logo for its 2021 Top 100 Remote Work Company to Watch

award next to it. It provides a third-party endorsement for its claim of being a flexible workplace. The tech company also chose to promote its recognition related



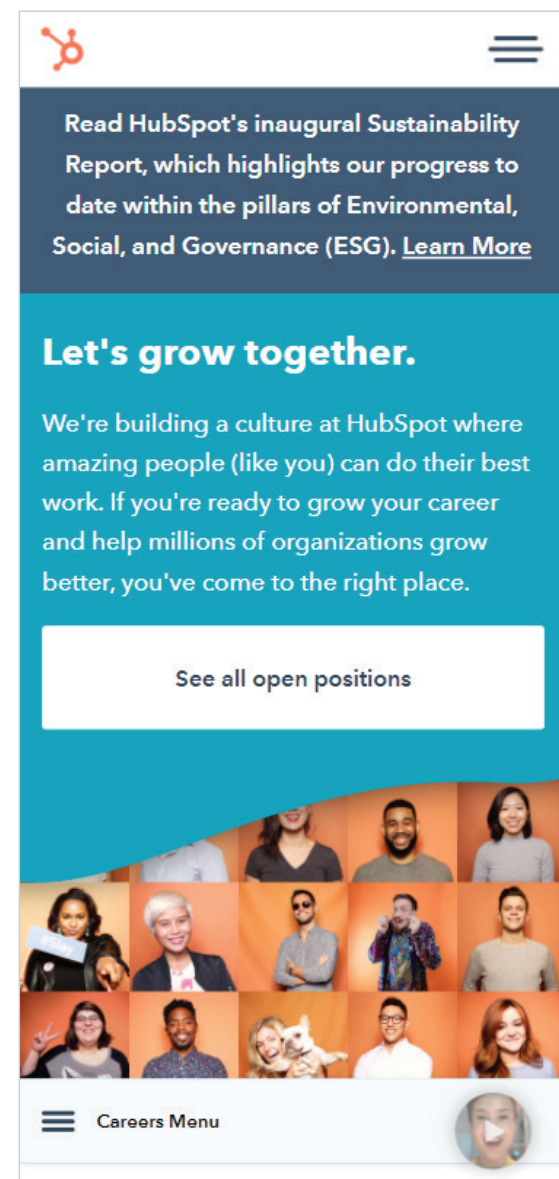
to it being an ethical company and a best place to work award for LGBTQIA+ on its career site. All three are awards for topics that today's candidates feel strongly about; the company certainly knows its audience.

What does the research tell us about awards?

Our research showed that medium-sized companies typically had information about their current awards easily accessible from their career sites, but fewer had diversity-related awards than we expected. It was the other way around for large companies: fewer current awards, but a higher percentage related to diversity. The results suggest larger companies are more concerned about the visibility of their diversity efforts, which is not surprising when you consider [86%](#) of global candidates say diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) in the workplace is important to them.

Reaction to the market – and sentiment

We've long known that a strong corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) program can help to attract and retain talent, but the pandemic has further raised awareness of how important this is to people. In a recent study, [66%](#) of people said that moments like the pandemic have caused them to care more about how their company acts. In addition, 60% of respondents revealed they'd take a pay cut to work at a company that has a strong purpose. HubSpot understands the importance of CSR and ESG and includes details of its sustainability report in a prominent location on its careers site. The company is doing its best to differentiate itself as a corporate citizen, while giving candidates an incentive to hit the apply button.



The role CSR plays in talent attraction and retention

People want to work for purpose-driven companies. Environmental and social concerns have long been a driver for candidates and employees alike, so drawing attention to these throughout the candidate journey is a must. It's about more than listing organizations you support though – employers should demonstrate progress and show the true impact of their CSR goals. Companies that have a strong showing in this category are those that prioritize their resources to drive initiatives that align well with their organization's mission and its employees, whether locally or globally.

Playing it forward

Nike stands out as a purpose-driven company. The sports giant weaves its stance on protecting the world throughout its career content. It uses bold terminology to show how important this matter is to them.

"To protect the planet, we don't wait for solutions, we create them."



The company includes details about how it hopes to achieve its CSR and ESG goals, as well as metrics that details its progress. This shows candidates that it's not just saying what it thinks people want to hear, it really does take CSR seriously – and has the evidence to back this up.

What does our research tell us about CSR?

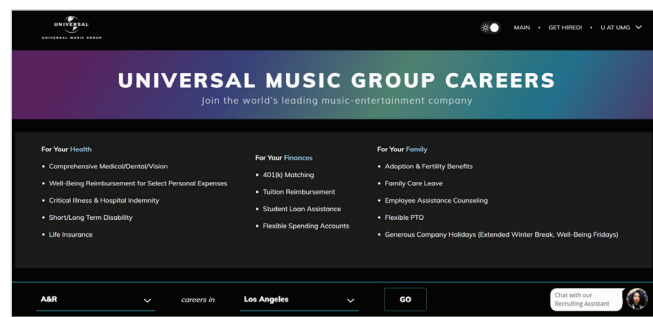
Our findings suggest that many employers still don't understand the importance of CSR to candidates and employees. Of the companies evaluated that excelled in CSR, 91% were large businesses. The results indicate larger companies understand their CSR efforts will likely be under closer scrutiny (from not just candidates, but employees, shareholders and customers). It's also worth noting that some of the smaller companies that were evaluated are built around services or solutions that have CSR built into their mission, such as sustainable energy and public health.

Evoke emotion and remain transparent

Successful advertising relies heavily on human emotion – and career promotion is no exception. Companies must focus on the human element of employment brand through relevant, timely content. Our research found that most brands have the information that candidates want but it's not evoking feelings of excitement and connection. Transparency is of utmost importance, so employees and candidates feel like they're part of the bigger picture. When it comes to DEIB, they want to know what goals are in place and they expect regular updates on progress. However, only 38% of respondents in a recent survey by [Fishbowl](#) reported receiving progress updates about DEIB from their employers. Everyone must be part of the conversation.

In tune with candidate desires

Universal Music Group (UMG) certainly understands the power of branding. Its career site is eye-catching, streamlined, on brand and uses images of its




employees (and music stars) throughout. The navigation is simple too. UMG describes its benefits program as a “perks playlist,” suggesting employees get to pick the benefits that matter most to them. This could act as differentiator, hence why it's displayed so prominently. It also has a chatbot that candidates can engage with in the moment. All the elements on this career site go to show that UMG takes the candidate experience seriously.

Taking a candidate-first approach

In promoting its career opportunities, Nugget Markets touches on sustainability and career growth – things that are important to today's candidates. Its career site is inviting and simple to navigate. It has plenty of photos of its employees throughout and on its social media platforms. Something noteworthy is that the photos are up to date as many feature employees in masks. Its relevant and reflects real life.

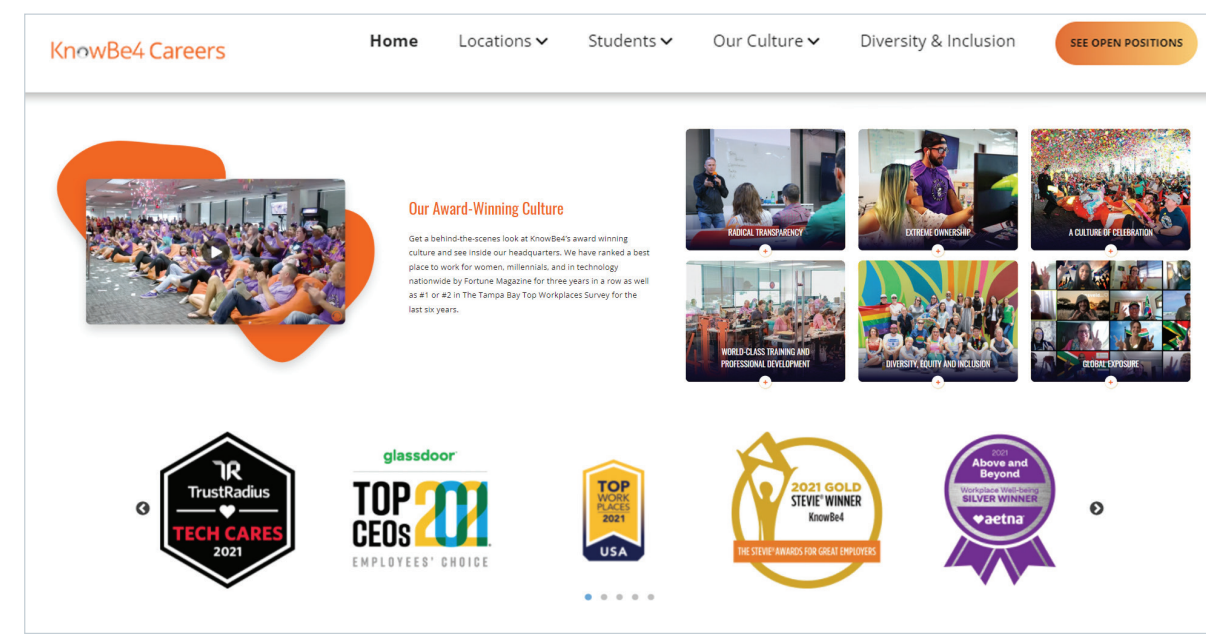


In addition, the company uses video employee testimonials to give jobseekers the opportunity to see what makes Nugget Markets so special. Its ads on social media are clear, concise and timely. It also had details of its sign-on bonuses in a prominent location on its careers site. By placing info about a potential sign-on bonus in such a prime location, Nugget Markets is doing its best to differentiate itself, while giving candidates an even bigger incentive to convert and hit the apply button.

 Chatbots can accelerate the candidate journey, but not all companies need them. Our research found larger companies were twice as likely to have a chatbot compared to medium companies, and six times more likely compared to small companies. This makes sense as small companies are less likely to be dealing with the same volume of candidates as their larger counterparts and are more likely to hire through direct networking. Large companies also have bigger budgets to invest in chatbot technology.

Simple navigation pays off

Best-in-class career sites focus on moving candidates to the next stage of the hiring process. The objective is to give candidates the information they need to convert then and there. Strategically placed prompts throughout can help to persuade candidates to apply or join talent communities.



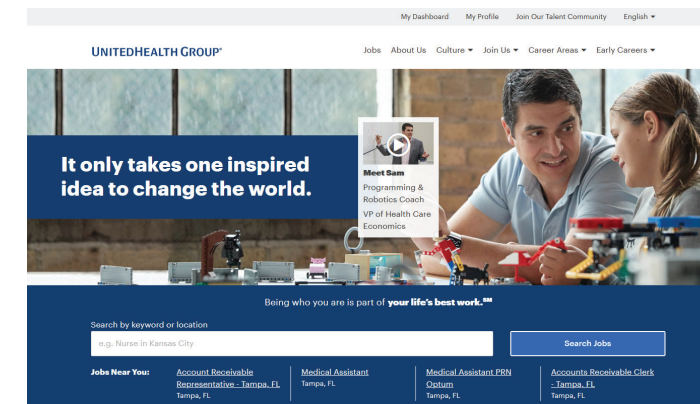
KnowBe4's career page stands out for several reasons. The security awards training platform provider has made its page as simple as possible to navigate. Our research found that many career sites simply aren't optimized for conversion. They're guilty of information overload and, as a result, important content gets buried. KnowBe4 encourages visitors to view current opportunities multiple times in a bid to get them to convert. One notable observation is that it also uses photos featuring real employees throughout its career site; this can help show diversity is taken seriously at a company.

Candidate-first mindset

UnitedHealth Group's career site is designed like a resource hub for those seeking new careers. It segments its open roles based on job type and has dedicated sections for veterans and early career opportunities

within reach. Its talent team certainly knows what best practice looks like in terms of career promotion as it has all the elements you'd be interested in: employee video testimonials (centrally placed, so you can't miss them), a chatbot, an employee blog that features a wide range of topics and a link to its Glassdoor profile (for added transparency).

It has a dedicated section about what jobseekers can expect should they apply for a role and interviewing tips for video interviews to help candidates be successful. It also has a COVID-19 response page that details how it's supporting its employees through the pandemic. This shows candidates that it does care and it's making operational adjustments to support employees as needed.

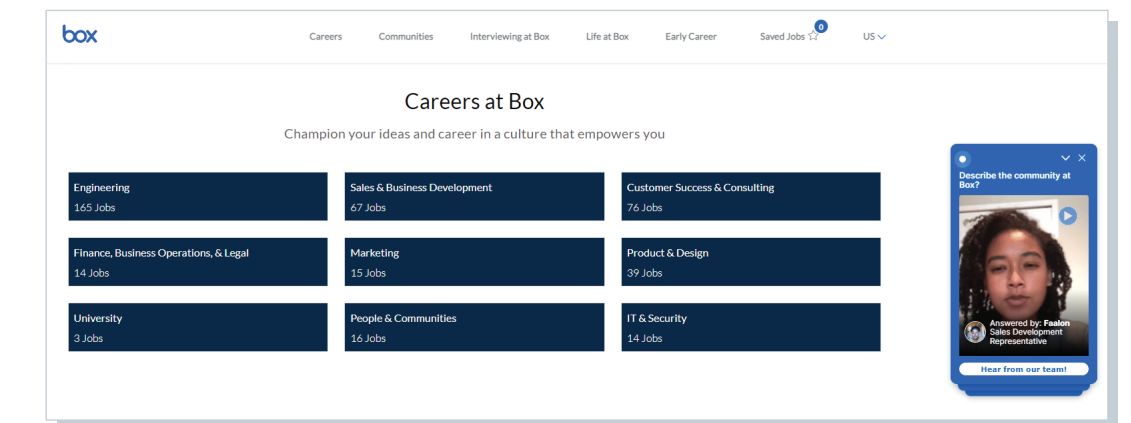


Our research revealed just 7% of the organizations evaluated had accessibility settings within their career pages. In the US, 26% of adults have a disability, so employers with career sites that aren't accessible could potentially be missing out on a large pool of talent. In addition, employers could also be opening themselves up to legal risk as career sites that aren't accessible risk breaching the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#).

Squaring up

Career sites that started conversations were the ones to stand out. Box's career site provides a frictionless experience for candidates by segmenting its roles from the outset to personalize the candidate experience. It lets applicants know they'll receive a response within three days while giving them the option to receive weekly job alerts for similar roles. It has employee videos alongside job descriptions to give potential applicants a glimpse into what being an employee is really like. Its objective is to convert candidates.

Box took the No. 6 spot in [Glassdoor's 2022 Best Places to Work](#) rankings. Every year, the review site recognizes the top 100 employers dedicated to cultivating a best-in-class company culture.

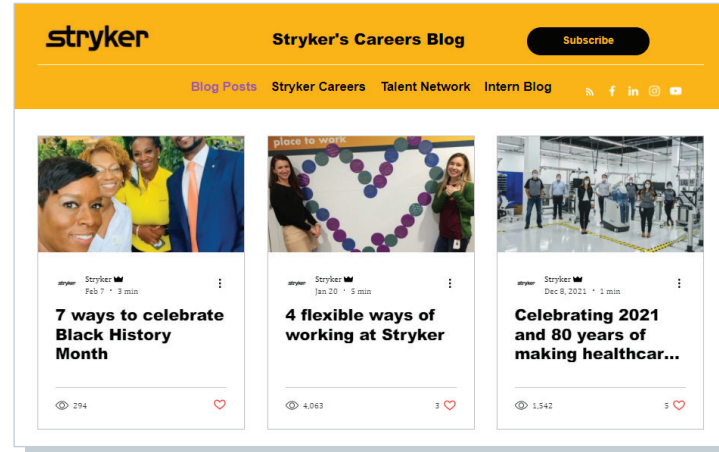


What did the research tell us about career site navigation?

The most accessible employment content on company sites found by our team of researchers included details on well-being initiatives (average number of clicks to access was 1.1), followed by workplace culture (1.2 clicks) and employee perks (1.4 clicks). This is logical given these are the topics candidates want to know most about when considering a career move. Some employment topics took 2.8 clicks to reach (pay equity policies/initiatives), which may mean candidates never reach it. Think about your own online experience. Have you ever abandoned an online cart because the process seems to go on and on?

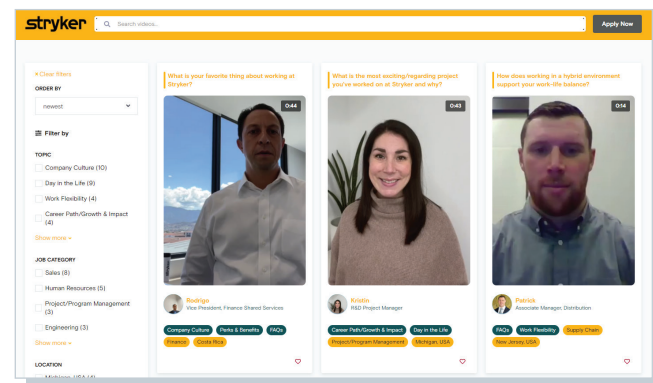
Striking the right balance

When it comes to employee and candidate perspectives, consistency is key regardless of business size. Candidates don't want to be bamboozled with corporate content; instead, they want authenticity. And this is why employee-generated content (in real-time) plays such a pivotal role in employment branding.



Stryker's career site hosts multiple employee-generated videos. Most feature employees (in a range of roles) talking about what a typical day looks like for them. The videos are self-shot, which is more authentic than a highly edited corporate video. Candidates also have the opportunity to filter the videos based on topic, job category and location. Like many of the career sites we evaluated, it also has its own hashtag (#WeAreStryker) to

encourage employees to share their experiences. The medical technology company gives its employees another platform via its careers blog. Featuring a mix of employee stories, career advice and Q&As, the blog gives candidates a chance to get a real feel for the company culture by those who are living it daily.



😊 Freedom of expression

Companies that use video hosting platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and YouTube Shorts are getting in front of jobseekers. This format allows for exceptional storytelling. Almost half (48%) of 18- to 29-year-olds in the US reportedly have a TikTok account, compared to just 30% who said they have a LinkedIn profile, so it's a way to expand your audience. Providing employees with a framework to express themselves through dedicated hashtags, employee blog features and user-generated video not only helps a company showcase its true colors to candidates, but it also gives employees an outlet to express themselves. For example, new employees at IKEA are encouraged to document their first day with short videos on TikTok. We're seeing more organizations adopt this approach, especially companies that hire in high volumes.



TikTok launched a pilot program featuring a new channel for recruitment and job discovery in July 2021. Job seekers could apply for roles with a TikTok video resume. The pilot only ran in the US with a select number of companies, but we expect this to be rolled out more widely. If your recruitment team isn't well-versed on TikTok, start exploring so they can get up to speed and capitalize on the recruitment benefits the platform brings.

📶 Why ditching the jargon speaks volumes

Bitwise Industries is a software consulting firm that takes a transparent approach to diversity hiring by speaking directly to candidates. Its job descriptions list diversity stats as a way of showing inclusion is at the heart of business operations. It's also an effective way to attract all kinds of talent – even for those without a tech background. Prioritizing diversity at the top of the page before it goes into required technologies and job responsibilities creates interest and differentiation in its space from other tech start-ups and firms.

💬 What did the research tell us about employee testimonials?

When it comes to employee testimonials in video format, the findings of our research showed small and medium-sized companies were the most likely to feature videos that felt authentic, compared to their larger counterparts, which preferred professionally produced content. While this might seem like a resources issue, having unpolished videos is actually beneficial. It feels more authentic and relatable to viewers. Overly produced, corporate video content can often give the impression that an employer is unapproachable or distant. Shorter videos – we're talking 60 seconds or fewer – that are natural and unscripted are more impactful, especially if they allow for an emotional connection.

People are twice as likely to share video content with their friends than any other type of content, including social media posts, product pages and blog posts/articles. However, the results of our research revealed that just 26% of the companies we evaluated had video testimonials. We expected this figure to be a lot higher. On a positive note, all the companies that had video testimonials featured someone from a visible diversity demographic. Highlighting diversity at the very start of a candidate's journey is vital, especially when you consider one in three employees and jobseekers (32%) would not apply to a job at companies where there is a lack of diversity among their workforces.

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Modernize your brand

The demand for talent will continue to outstrip supply for the foreseeable future – and beyond. Companies that treat their people well will find it easier to attract and retain talent. But as workplaces and candidate expectations evolve, so too must employment brands. Review your employment brand continuously and benchmark it against your competitors to see how you can differentiate your company and position as an employer of choice. It should truly align with your employee value proposition (EVP) and the employee experience. Be sure to promote your employment brand on the platforms favored by potential candidates or your company will struggle to find the talent it needs to excel in the future.

Mile markers for a modern employer brand

Employee value proposition

The needs and desires of talent have changed, and your EVP must evolve to reflect that. Talk to your employees, analyze engagement data, read your employer reviews and listen to the talent market. Then take an objective look at your EVP and determine if you are delivering on employees' expectations.

Employee stories

Stand-out talent brands are authentic and bold in their approach to storytelling. They embrace self-expression, emphasize diversity and are not afraid to offer a glimpse into the present moment. Modern employer brands share content that is individualized and feels spontaneous because they are empowering employees to tell their own stories.

Career sites

Applying for a job should be a simple experience. Modern employer brands have an intimate understanding of what happens when talent interacts with their career site. The best career sites are clutter free, easy to navigate and have multiple conversion points. A more minimalist approach to recruitment marketing content garners greater attention and brings them there.

Channels

The number of social media users (across all generations in the workforce) are scrolling through stories. Talent brands that use a range of social platforms (established and new-to-market) to tell their stories will reach a bigger audience. Tried and tested isn't always best when it comes to social media promotion; you may have to step outside your comfort zone.

Talent community

Employer branding doesn't stop at application or opt-in. Modern employment brands extend their relationship with candidate prospects through their talent communities by integrating a range of content genres within their engagement strategies.

Companies evaluated (and those that excelled)



LARGE >5,000 employees



It's no surprise that large companies have access to bigger budgets and teams to allocate for employment brand awareness. But, because of their size, they risk talent feeling "lost in the mix," which leads to a disconnected employee experience. To combat this, allocate large-scale resources toward creating smaller-scale talent experiences. Uphold unique and engaging EVPs to specific talent groups that give your organization's culture a more intimate feel with all the benefits that come from being one of the bigger firms.

MEDIUM >1,000 employees



Mid-sized companies may appear to have the best of both worlds, but challenges often persist around growing pains. How can you scale the candidate experience or deal with shifting priorities and budgets? These companies must spotlight industry differentiators in their EVP and showcase authenticity in their company culture. Prioritize employee testimonial videos and be transparent about room for advancement. The right talent will be invigorated by the chance to become a part of your growth.

SMALL <1,000 employees



Just because you're small doesn't mean you can't be mighty. Smaller companies have more agility and can leverage their unique voice and EVPs creatively in ways that bigger companies can't match. Startups suffer from limited recruitment technology options due to tight budgets and smaller hiring volumes; justifying those expenses upfront can be challenging. Smaller companies should push their advantage with a human-centric approach to the candidate experience. This will ensure a more connected and positive experience, boosting word of mouth and company advocates.



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info@wilsonhcg.com | wilsonhcg.com |    

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