How to Create Your Talent Brand

greenhouse + officevibe

What to Expect

INTRODUCTION:

The Importance of Talent Branding 3

HOW TO CREATE YOUR TALENT BRAND:

Company Culture 9

HOW TO SHARE YOUR TALENT BRAND:

Talent Marketing 20

Conclusion 37

INTRODUCTION:

The Importance of Talent Branding

You've probably heard the buzz about employer branding and the importance of positioning your company as a great place to work.

The problem with the term "employer brand" is that it's often defined by the organization, rather than the people who work there. Instead, a "talent brand" incorporates the values, attributes, and opinions of employees. This means that employers have to consider not only what they are projecting externally, but also how they're building and fostering their company culture internally.

In short, your talent brand has two components: company culture and talent marketing.

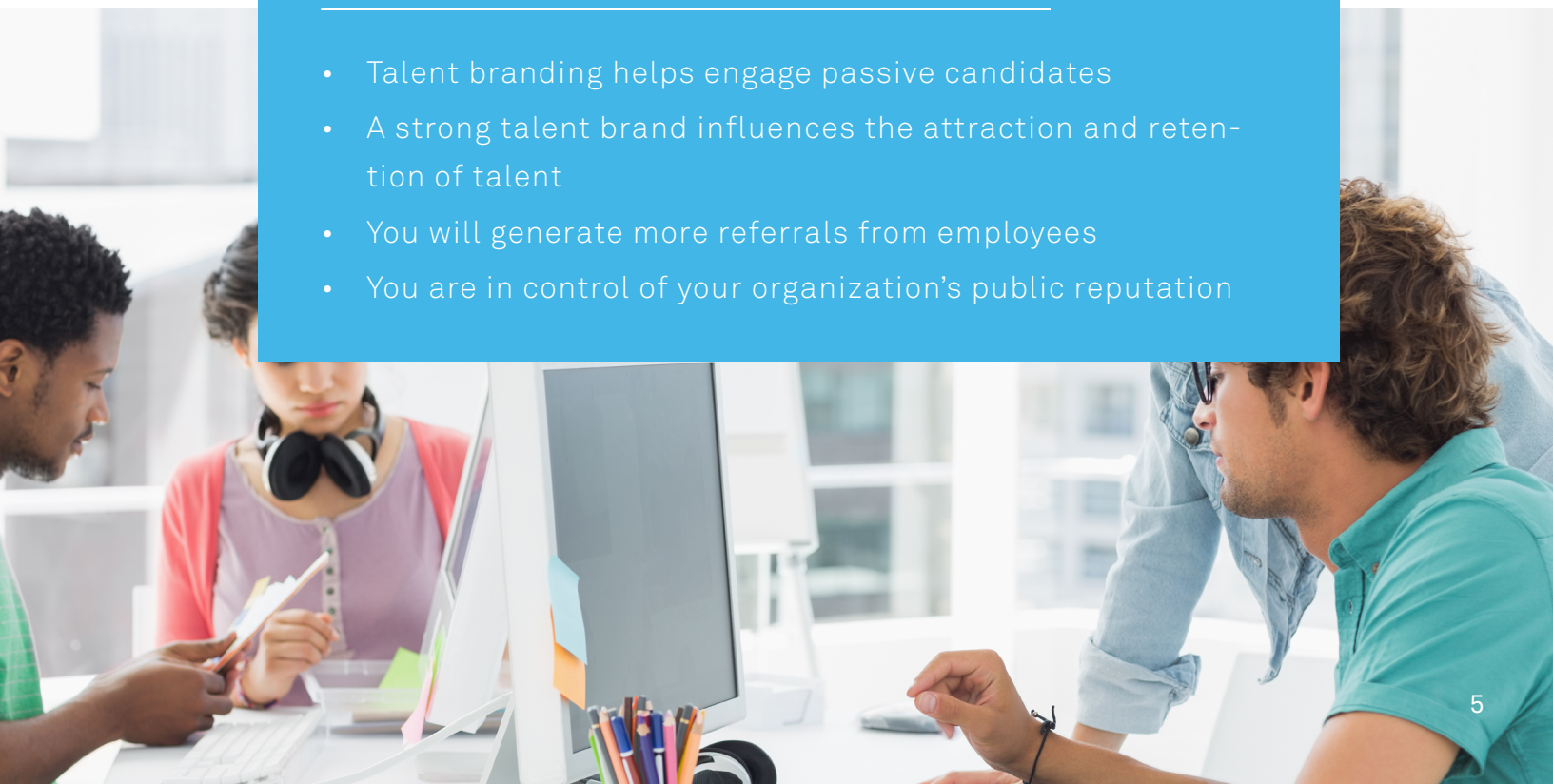
Creating a thoughtful and strategic approach to both will help your organization stand out in the noisy talent market, attract high quality candidates, and improve retention and engagement of current employees.

What's more, you'll increase the number of inbound applicants, reduce hiring costs, create a steady pipeline of candidates, and increase the quality of candidates. Finally, explicitly defining your company culture means that new hires are more likely to be aligned with company values and culture. It's a strategy that pays dividends as time goes on!

In this eBook, we'll share actionable tips that will help you create and market your talent brand. If you're creating one from scratch, you're in the right place! If you're looking to make some improvements or amplify your existing brand, you just may learn a thing or two from the insights shared by talent leaders from companies like Quirky, Airbnb, and TripAdvisor.

WHY YOUR TALENT BRAND MATTERS

- Talent branding helps engage passive candidates
- A strong talent brand influences the attraction and retention of talent
- You will generate more referrals from employees
- You are in control of your organization's public reputation



Attracting Passive Candidates

Want the best talent to work at your company? Then your company needs to start doing its part.

According to LinkedIn Talent Solutions research, a strong talent brand is key to engaging passive candidates and attracting the best talent. A strong talent brand increases response rates to recruiter messages, helps attract 50% more applicants to the job, and can result in 3x as many hires found through the Linkedin platform. It's no wonder that having a strong talent brand is associated with a lower cost per hire!

Most of the best talent will be passive talent. In fact, nearly 80% of the workforce is passive! This means that you need to start positioning your company as a compelling, rewarding place to work. If you don't, you're at risk of losing to your competitors.

Improving Retention

Any claims you make during the candidate experience must be true, otherwise you're setting yourself up for failure. If

a new hire is a bad match due to false expectations, it's a nightmare to have to replace him or her.

The responsibility is on the company to be clear from the outset about what type of environment you're bringing new hires into. Make sure you're hiring people that will fit in with the culture. Any bad hire will ultimately lead to turnover, which has a huge effect on your company's bottom line.

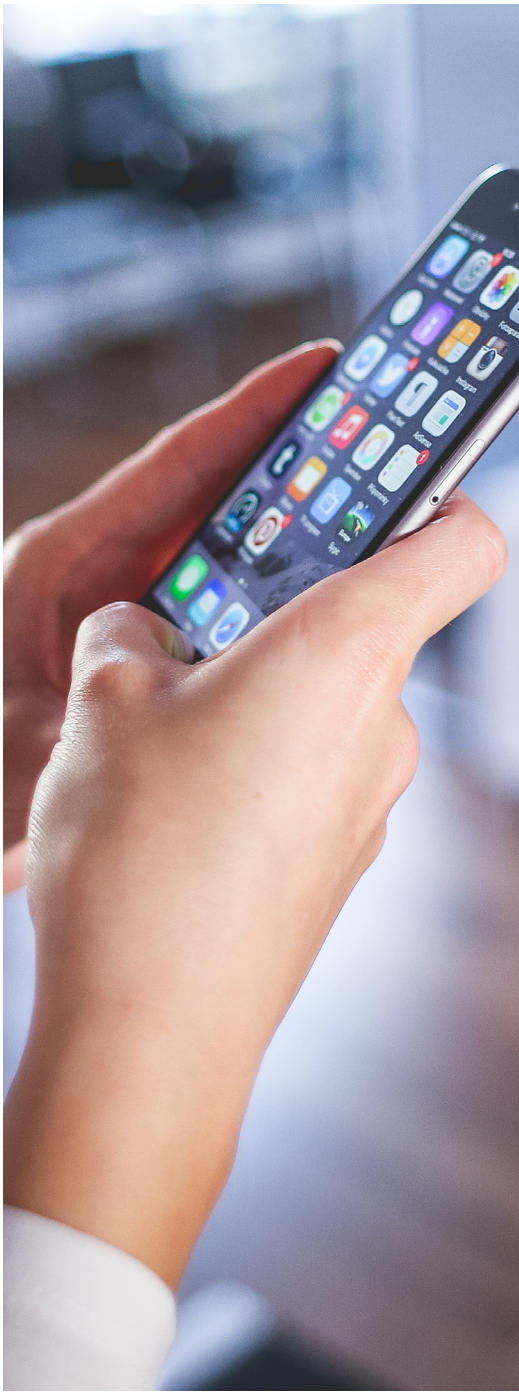
The financial effects of turnover are quite scary. Some estimates put it at more than double the initial salary. The problem gets even worse when you're trying to replace a very specialized role that's hard to recruit for.

According to research, having a good talent brand helps reduce turnover, and decrease your cost per hire:

- Companies with a stronger brand have a 28% lower turnover rate than companies with a weaker one
- Candidates under 40 years old are 61% more likely to consider a job at a company with a strong brand
- Companies with a weaker talent brand report a cost per hire that is almost double that of companies with a strong brand
- Talent brand is almost 3x as likely to be tied to job consideration among managers and lower-level employees as those at director level or above

There's a lot more to good branding than just a social media campaign or an attractive careers page. It's important to bear in mind that in order to have a good talent branding strategy, companies must involve their employees.

One way to do this is to encourage employees to be active on social media. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer, trust in CEOs has been declining, but trust in company employees has grown.



Your employees are on social media anyway, so as a company you have two choices. You can either discourage them from being on social media (at which point they'll probably sneak it on their smart-phones) or you can encourage them to make your brand more human.

Encourage your employees to be active on social media, representing your brand and interacting with customers and candidates. It is possible that, as a result, you can increase customer service, sales, and recruiting efforts by allowing employees to play a role.

HOW TO CREATE YOUR TALENT BRAND:

Company Culture

1 Interview Your A-Players

In order to attract and hire A-players into your organization, you need to understand what motivates them.

Having well-defined talent profiles helps you to create messaging that will spark interest or action from the right talent. It also helps to ensure that you're targeting the type of candidates that you want applying for your job.

A-PLAYER INTERVIEW QUESTION CHEAT SHEET

- What made you join our company?
- What is your favorite part about working here?
- How is your perfomance measured?
- What are some of the biggest challenges of your jobs?
- What are some projects you're excited about?
- How did you find this job?
- Where do you go for career-related information online?

Define your candidate profiles by conducting interviews with your existing employees. Take note of goals, challenges, pain points, and any personal information shared among your top performers. Ask questions like, What made you join our company? What gets you out of bed each morning? What was lacking at your last job?

For example, Greenhouse's VP of Engineering recently

shared that great engineers are motivated by the opportunity to learn, not perks. If you blanket pitch all of the perks that your company offers, you might actually turn off a great developer. Similarly, a great engineer is motivated by very different things than a great salesperson. So be sure to run this exercise across all the different roles at your organization. There should be common attributes among the members of your organization, but be sure to note the differences.

2 Identify Core Culture Values

The common attributes among your company's A-players should help define your core culture values. Core values are what will shape the foundation of your company culture, so it's important to take this process seriously.

These values are what will guide you in every decision you make. Things like hiring, firing, and the way you conduct performance reviews should all be influenced by your core values.

> There are far too many companies out there that create core values just for the sake of creating them.

Not taking your core values seriously diminishes their importance and can lead to mis-hires.

Once you've decided that being a values-based company is for you, the first step in defining your company's core values is to define your personal core values, which is surprisingly harder than it sounds. One way to do this is through author Dave Logan's Mountains and Valleys exercise, where you

look at the “highs” and “lows” of your life to discover what’s important to you.

The second step in defining your company’s core values is to collect values from employees to see what matters to them. From there, you can combine those values to look for common themes.

Zappos is a company that took the time to explicitly define their core values, which they use to develop their culture, brand, and business. They even have a department called Zappos Insights to help teach other companies how to become a values-based company. Even though they foster an employee-centric culture and have been named to Fortune’s 100 Best Companies To Work For list 6 years in a row, it took them years to define their own core values.

> Even though our core values guide us in everything we do today, we didn’t actually have any formal core values for the first six or seven years of the company’s history.

Tony Hsieh,
CEO of Zappos

This is the actual email that was sent out at Zappos in 2005, when they were starting the process of defining the company's core culture values:

> "Companies have core values, and we're working on defining them explicitly for Zappos, so everyone is on the same page...
>
> But the purpose of this email is to ask what everyone's personal values are... please email me 4 or 5 values that you live by (or want to live by) that define who you are or who you want to be... Each value should be one word or at most a short phrase (but ideally one word)... Please email me the values that are significant and meaningful to you personally, not necessarily having anything to do with the company's values..."

Just like Zappos did, it's important to ask for everyone's input. Use an employee survey to find out what really matters to them, and from there, you can find common themes that will make your core values authentic. While it's important to get buy-in from everyone, employees need to see senior leadership support the process in order to take it seriously. The fact that Tony Hsieh sent out the initial email showed that this was of high importance to the entire company.

The payoffs of defining your culture values can be huge. In addition, hiring for culture fit becomes so much easier, because you have all of your "requirements" written down already.

There is some evidence that core values are directly related to profits. If a new employee is aligned with the company's core values, meaning he or she shares similar values, that is the definition of a good culture fit. Since everyone is living by the same values, the decision-making process becomes much clearer, making it easier for everyone to do good work. The Center for Values-Driven Leadership at Benedictine University is conducting a longitudinal study to look at the relationship between core values and profit.

One example is a company called Tasty Catering. It grew from a single hot dog stand to one of Chicago's top catering businesses. They've built a culture that makes decisions based on their core values, like; "a culture of individual discipline" and, "freedom and responsibility within the culture of individual discipline." By focusing on their core values, employees found a way to cut food costs by huge margins, and grew sales by 10% and profit by 142% in a single year.

CULTURE QUESTIONS

From Jason Medley, Director of Talent Acquisition at Imgur

- What is our mission / What are we passionate about?
- How will we serve our clients and customers?
- How will we work together as a team?
- How will I contribute as an individual
- How do we communicate internally and externally?
- What do we celebrate / How do we celebrate?
- How do we overcome obstacles and conflict?
- How do we move forward?
- What types of policies should we implement?
- What does our office environment look like?

3 Communicate Your Values Internally

Communicating your values internally can be done in many ways, and remember that there is no such thing as too much communication. If you use an intranet or enterprise social network, use those to communicate your values frequently. If your company has an internal blog or monthly newsletter, take advantage of that. Use every channel at your disposal to make sure that the message is being reinforced.

Every decision you make has to reflect these values, so be ready for that. Constantly repeat them to employees, remind them why they're doing what they're doing. At Officevibe, the values are painted on the wall so that they never forget.

CORE VALUES STUDY: GROVO

Before Grovo was a company, before there was an office filled with Apple equipment, standing desks, and personal trainers, its founders Jeff Fernandez, Nick Narodny and Surag Mungekar were working out of an apartment building. Even then, the Grovo team knew that the only thing that would set it apart would be its people and culture.

The founders agreed to prioritize making Grovo a place where great people wanted to work. So they put together a Standard of Performance that defines the values that they wanted to maintain at the company. Some of the most important pieces include: be fair, show character, be deeply committed to learning and teaching, respect each person and what he/she does for the company.

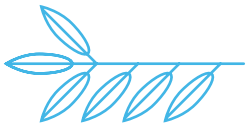
The company is now in high-growth mode, hiring roughly 100 people since June of last year. But despite the need to fill such a high number of positions, culture fit is never compromised. “Because the core values were articulated from the very beginning, we’ve been able to preserve them,” says Grovo Talent Coordinator, Kaela Diomede.

4 Interview for Culture Attributes

Now that you've explicitly defined your company culture, it's important to build a team that shares the attributes of your existing top performers.

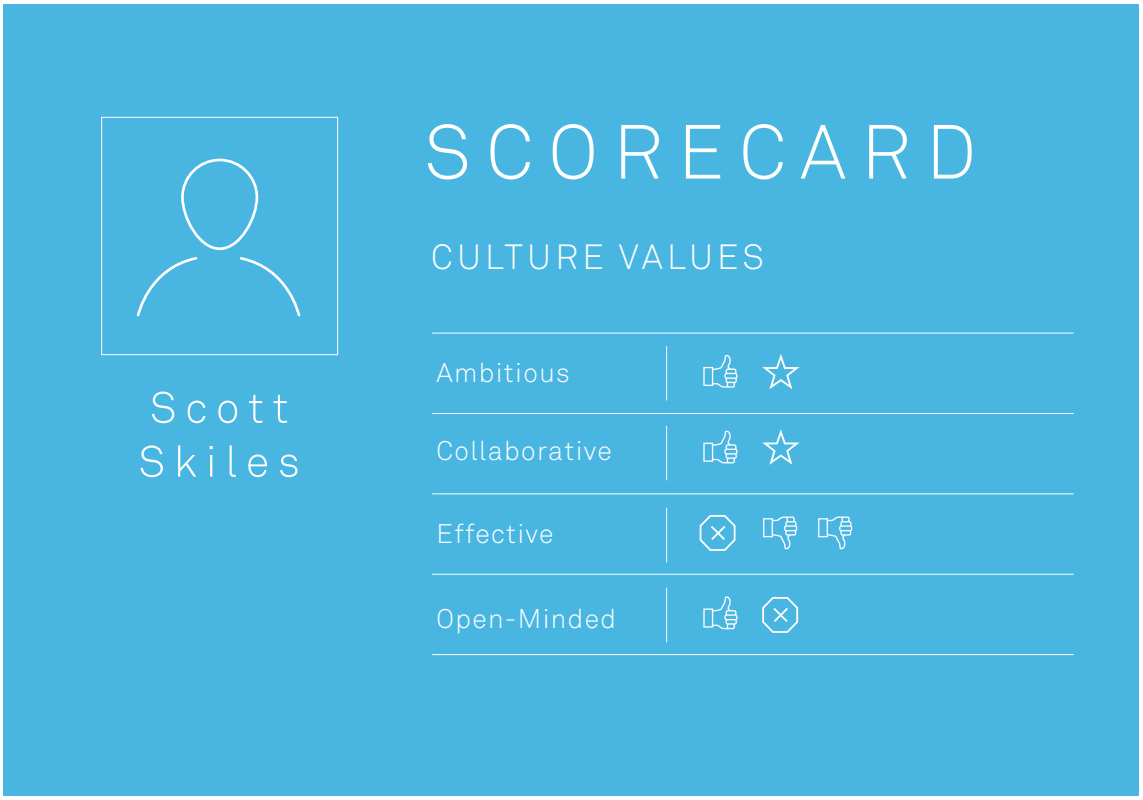
Many interview questions focus on evaluating a candidate's experience, skill set, or performance. Be sure to include questions that assess whether a candidate shares your culture attributes. For example, if one of your core culture values is, "we are team players," you could ask questions about a time when the candidate has stepped outside of the boundaries of his or her job description to help out a colleague. If one of your culture values is, "we are customer-focused," ask about a time when the candidate went above and beyond for a customer.

Many companies make the mistake of evaluating culture fit by relying on gut feeling.



Just because you have similar interests or a great conversation, this doesn't mean that a candidate is a good fit for the

organization. Be sure to add culture values to your candidate scorecard, adding relevant questions to your interview kits, and scoring each attribute individually to make smart, evidence-based decisions.



HOW TO SHARE YOUR TALENT BRAND:

Talent Marketing

1 Revamp Your Careers Page

Good news! You already have a website where you can showcase your company culture. It's your careers page!

Your careers page should reflect who you are, not just what you need. Too many careers pages include one or more of these common offenders:

- It's nothing more than a list of vacancies.
- It uses stock photos (you're not fooling anyone).
- It uses cliché job titles like "ninjas" and "rock stars."
- There's no why - why a great candidate should work for you.

Do any of those sound familiar?

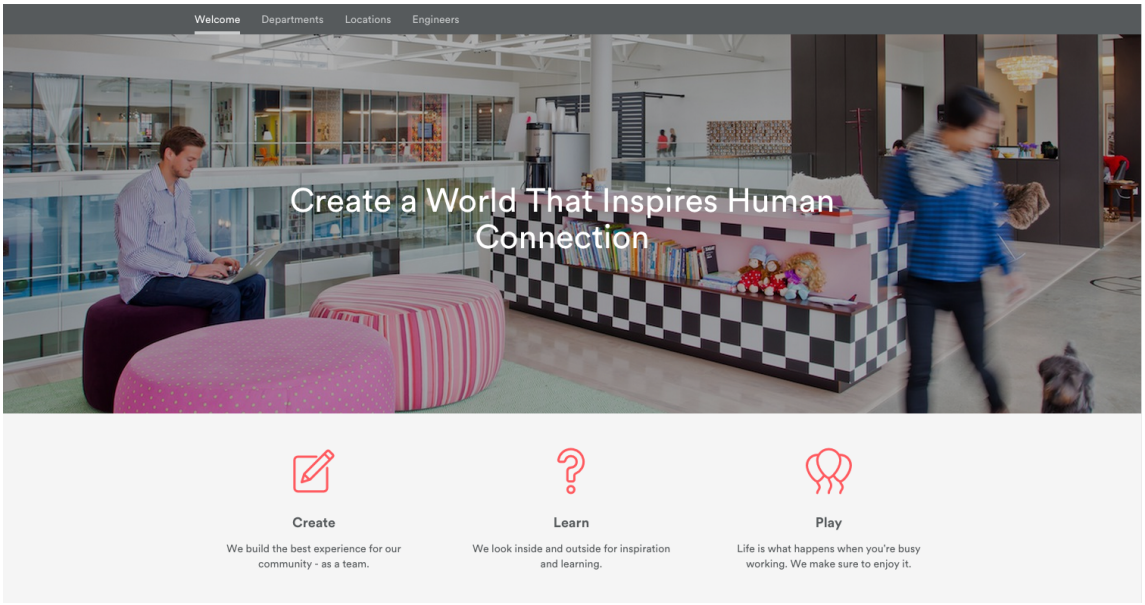
Instead, your careers page should speak to the motivators of top talent—the key attributes that you defined from your interviews with A-players. It should also give a clear picture of who you are as an organization by including quotes, pictures, or your culture credo.

Get some inspiration from these careers pages of Greenhouse customers (see following pages):

Carrot Creative

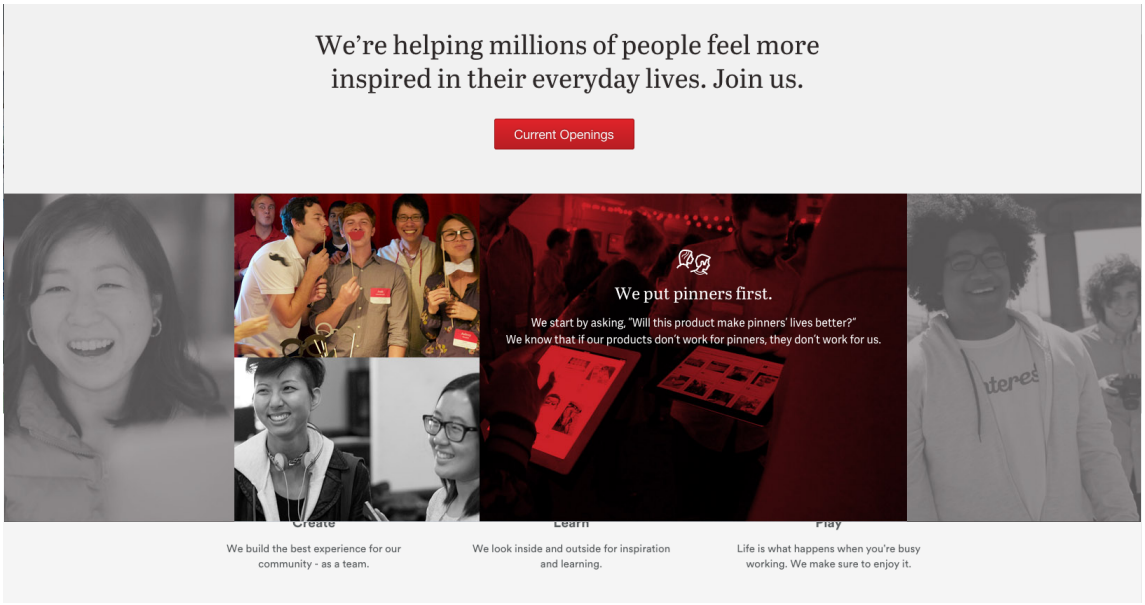
WHY WE LOVE IT: Carrot Creative's careers page gives an authentic look into the company's culture by incorporating videos of employees collaborating and socializing. It also includes fun, interactive elements like rocket ships and astronauts.

Airbnb



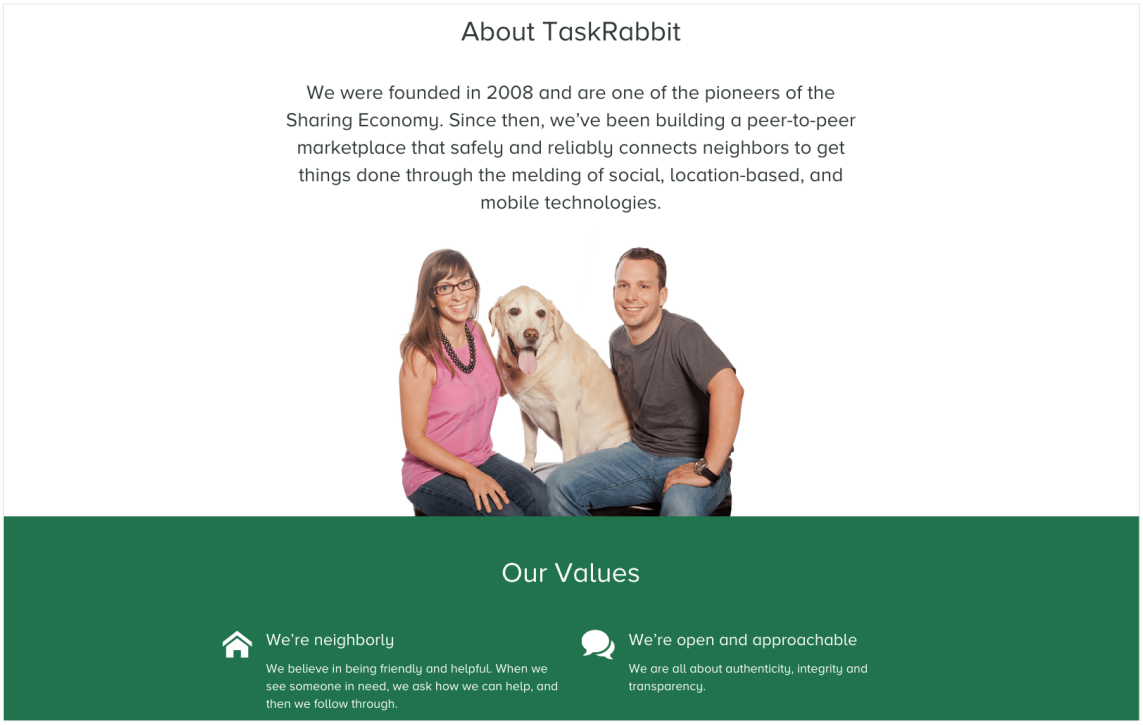
WHY WE LOVE IT: Airbnb's careers page shares a clear mission statement that inspires. It explicitly defines the type of employees they are and the type of candidates they're seeking. It also intrigues great applicants by citing quotes from regular fireside chats with well-known innovators.

Pinterest



WHY WE LOVE IT: On its careers page, Pinterest defines the 4 core values of organization. Quotes by current employees are segmented by role to better speak to the motivators of each type of worker.

TaskRabbit



WHY WE LOVE IT: TaskRabbit humanizes the company with pictures of the founders and their dog. The careers page does a great job of outlining the company values and who they are as an organization.

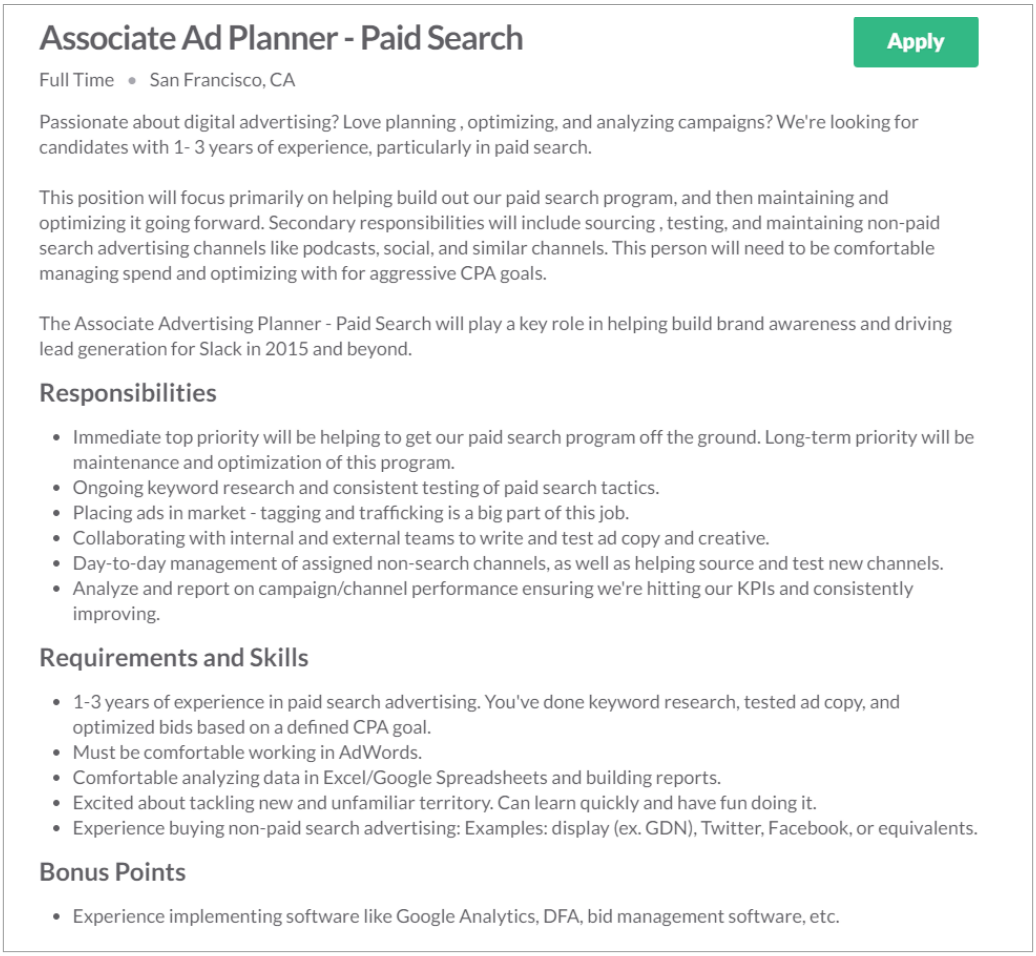
2 Write Good Job Descriptions

There are a lot of companies that write their job descriptions with the attitude of, “what can they do for us?” What you should be asking is, “what can we do for them?”

It’s also important to understand how you need to switch your language depending on whom you’re trying to hire. A marketing person will respond differently from a software developer depending on the diction and framing of the job description.

Here are three great examples of job descriptions; we’ll go through each one separately and explain why they’re so good.

Slack
Marketing Position



Associate Ad Planner - Paid Search

Apply

Full Time • San Francisco, CA

Passionate about digital advertising? Love planning , optimizing, and analyzing campaigns? We're looking for candidates with 1- 3 years of experience, particularly in paid search.

This position will focus primarily on helping build out our paid search program, and then maintaining and optimizing it going forward. Secondary responsibilities will include sourcing , testing, and maintaining non-paid search advertising channels like podcasts, social, and similar channels. This person will need to be comfortable managing spend and optimizing with for aggressive CPA goals.

The Associate Advertising Planner - Paid Search will play a key role in helping build brand awareness and driving lead generation for Slack in 2015 and beyond.

Responsibilities

- Immediate top priority will be helping to get our paid search program off the ground. Long-term priority will be maintenance and optimization of this program.
- Ongoing keyword research and consistent testing of paid search tactics.
- Placing ads in market - tagging and trafficking is a big part of this job.
- Collaborating with internal and external teams to write and test ad copy and creative.
- Day-to-day management of assigned non-search channels, as well as helping source and test new channels.
- Analyze and report on campaign/channel performance ensuring we're hitting our KPIs and consistently improving.

Requirements and Skills

- 1-3 years of experience in paid search advertising. You've done keyword research, tested ad copy, and optimized bids based on a defined CPA goal.
- Must be comfortable working in AdWords.
- Comfortable analyzing data in Excel/Google Spreadsheets and building reports.
- Excited about tackling new and unfamiliar territory. Can learn quickly and have fun doing it.
- Experience buying non-paid search advertising: Examples: display (ex. GDN), Twitter, Facebook, or equivalents.

Bonus Points

- Experience implementing software like Google Analytics, DFA, bid management software, etc.

This is a marketing position at Slack, a team communication app and one of the fastest-growing companies ever.

The job description starts with, “Passionate about digital advertising? Love planning, optimizing and analyzing campaigns?” This speaks directly to what type of person they’re looking for.

It’s short, conversational, and clearly explains what this person would be doing day-to-day. Another great thing that they do is separate “Requirements” and “Bonus Points” as opposed to putting all of it under requirements.

Zappos
Software Engineer
Position

Development - Software Engineering:
Software Engineer

Description

What are you currently doing? We're building a system that serves the best customers in the world – The Zappos Family of Companies customers. Our custom-tuned web platform serves thousands of page views per second, drives our public API, sells lots of great merchandise each day, and uses some of the most cutting-edge technology available. We need you to come help us make this great system even better.

And... we're hiring like crazy right now, and looking for smart, forward-thinking problem solvers to join our world-class technology team. We have built most of our systems on open-source technology. We use Solr, Drupal, Java, Elastic Search, EC2, and more (you can even help us figure out what else!).

As an Associate Software Engineer, you will be developing a mix of new features for the site as well as investigating cutting-edge technologies to make the site better (either more robust, able to handle more transactions, or simply provide a better customer experience).

Experience and skills needed to do that thing you love at Zappos:

- 3+ years production Java software development experience (6+ if not JAva or if no college degree
- Solid computer science fundamentals (theory, data structures, algorithms)
- Experience with Java frameworks / build systems (Spring, Maven, JUnit, Camel, etc)
- Familiarity with testing related technologies such as EasyMock, Mockito, Selenium
- Experience with Linux and Mac environments
- Experience with SQL and relational databases

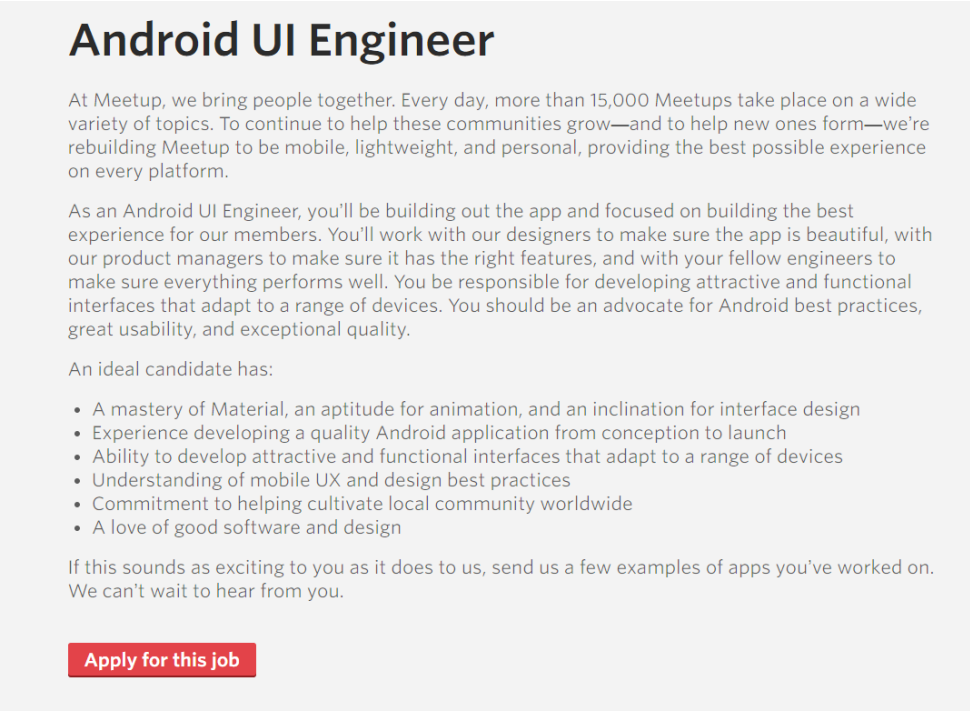
Preferred:

- BS/MS in Computer Science

This job description is for a software engineering position at Zappos. There are a few reasons why this one is so good:

The words they use speak directly to what gets software engineers excited. Working with world-class people, using cutting edge technology, and contributing to open source technologies. Another great thing they do is empower their engineers to suggest ideas for improvement. When they talk about the technologies they use, they write, "and more (you can even help us figure out what else!)."

Meetup
UI Engineer Position



Android UI Engineer

At Meetup, we bring people together. Every day, more than 15,000 Meetups take place on a wide variety of topics. To continue to help these communities grow—and to help new ones form—we're rebuilding Meetup to be mobile, lightweight, and personal, providing the best possible experience on every platform.

As an Android UI Engineer, you'll be building out the app and focused on building the best experience for our members. You'll work with our designers to make sure the app is beautiful, with our product managers to make sure it has the right features, and with your fellow engineers to make sure everything performs well. You be responsible for developing attractive and functional interfaces that adapt to a range of devices. You should be an advocate for Android best practices, great usability, and exceptional quality.

An ideal candidate has:

- A mastery of Material, an aptitude for animation, and an inclination for interface design
- Experience developing a quality Android application from conception to launch
- Ability to develop attractive and functional interfaces that adapt to a range of devices
- Understanding of mobile UX and design best practices
- Commitment to helping cultivate local community worldwide
- A love of good software and design

If this sounds as exciting to you as it does to us, send us a few examples of apps you've worked on. We can't wait to hear from you.

Apply for this job

The third job is for a UI engineer position at Meetup. What's great about this one is that they focus on their company's mission. It starts off, "At Meetup, we bring people together." It's also very short and to the point, and it nicely describes what the day-to-day will be like, which gives the candidates insight into their inevitable question of, "What can I expect if I were to work there?"

To write a good job description you need to be honest, transparent, and conversational.

Pretend you're having a chat with your friend and you're pitching her the job. Make it fun, make it short, and show candidates why they should want to work there.

3 Build a Talent Community

Now, you're probably thinking, okay, I have a great careers page and awesome job descriptions. How do I get top talent to even discover my website? The answer? Start building a talent community.

> A talent community helps build a pipeline of high quality candidates by exposing them to your brand and building relationships with them over time.

This is how you get passive candidates excited about your company, and how you compete with giants like Google or General Electric.

Bea Dominguez, an expert at building talent communities, brought marketing practices into the recruiting strategy at BrightRoll. She says, "For us, talent community was about bringing marketing practices like branding, events, and content creation into recruiting. By building a strong talent brand, we were able to tell the story of who we are as a

company. It also helped us build authentic and long-lasting relationships that strengthen our candidate pipeline."

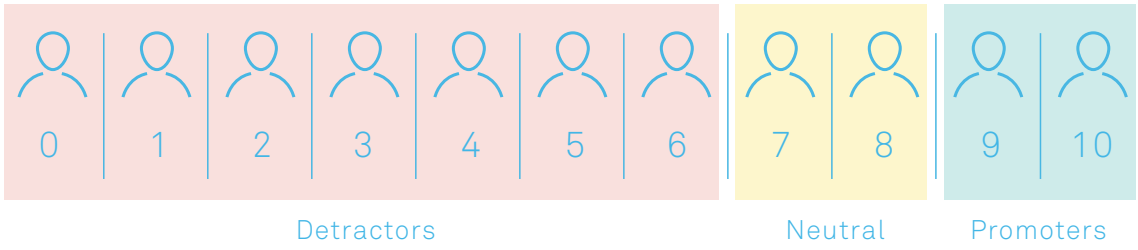
In order to kick-start your talent community, use events to develop brand awareness and engage candidates. Decide what type of events to hold based on the type of talent you are looking to attract. For example, at BrightRoll, engineering and product hires were a key priority. As a result, Bea and her team started a Data Driven Women speaker series to elevate female voices in tech. These events drew attendees from all over—it allowed candidates to meet BrightRoll employees, check out the office, and chat with like-minded folks.

At Disqus, a common theme among employees is the love of playing games. Because of this, the company hosts a regular game night. The team uses these events as an opportunity to get to know candidates, even if it isn't exactly the right time for them to join the team. The candidates are able to build relationships with Disqus employees and identify a common interest!

4 Create Talent Ambassadors

A great way to increase exposure and grow your recruiting efforts is to enlist the help of brand ambassadors. When you have employees that are happy and proud of where they work, they're more likely to recommend jobs to their network. This is commonly referred to as the Net Promoter Score (NPS).

The NPS works like this. You ask a customer a simple question: "On a scale from 1-10, how likely are you to recommend our product/service to a friend?" Scores of 6 or lower indicate that that person is a detractor, 6-8 are neutral, and 8-10 are known as promoters.



NPS is calculated by subtracting the percentage of customers who are Detractors from the percentage of customers who are Promoters. This is calculated by:

((# of Promoters) – (# of Detractors)) / (Total # of customers)

This will give you the percentage of customers that are promoters, minus the percentage of customers that are detractors.

In product management, it's the best way to know if your product is actually good, because the theory is, if someone is willing to recommend your product to a friend, then they actually like it. In this case, instead of using it for customer service, you're using it to gauge how employees really feel about your company.

Every company can, and should, measure its employee NPS to see how likely its employees are to recommend the company to their friends. Smart and hardworking people often know other smart, hardworking people.

5 Provide an Awesome Candidate Experience

One of the easiest ways to make or break your talent brand is through the experience a candidate has during the interview process. These are the people that will be out in the world talking about you and posting on websites like Glassdoor. So make sure they have a good experience, even if you don't hire them!

Put a lot of thought into each stage the candidate goes through. At Airbnb, the team used a method called story-boarding to map out the candidate experience.

When constructing their interview stages, they asked: "What do we want the candidate to know? How do we want them to feel? What does rejection look like at each stage? What makes this stage uniquely Airbnb?"

The recruiting team didn't rely on assumptions to map out these stages. To truly understand the candidate experience, they went out and applied for several jobs.

Here are a few things you can learn from them:

THE IMPORTANCE OF REJECTION

Rejection is one of the most important pieces of the candidate experience, and the team found that there was nothing unique about Airbnb's rejection emails. In fact, much of Silicon Valley was using the same ATS at that point. The default, automated rejection email was exactly the same. At this time, Airbnb was rejecting roughly 98% of the applicants that came in, so the rejection experience was key.

SET EXPECTATIONS OFTEN

This is a huge component of the candidate experience. Jill Riopelle, head of recruiting at Airbnb, learned that TiVo has an automated response that gives candidates an expected wait time, as well as an FAQ section that candidates can use to learn more about the company.

USE YOUR BRAND VOICE

They found that some of their email language was incongruous with their brand. An automated message does not make you feel that you "Belong," Airbnb's company ethos.

WHAT MAKES YOU DIFFERENT

Because Airbnb had just made tons of new hires, they had recent candidates to ask. They put out red and green post-its and asked people to mark what was bad or good at each stage of the process.

They were able to determine the things that made the company stand out – for example, people liked getting out of the interview and interacting with the team. Now, the recruiting coordinators offer an extensive tour during interviews.

HOW TO MEASURE THE IMPACT OF YOUR TALENT BRAND

1. Website Traffic
2. Candidate Survey Feedback
3. New Hire Surveys
4. Awareness and Ratings
5. Quality of Hire, Retention of Employees
6. Engagement on Social Sites

Conclusion

Recent research has found that only about 51% of companies have a working talent brand strategy in place. An additional 24% are working towards a plan and 19% are revising theirs. There is no doubt that talent branding is a critical piece of your talent acquisition strategy. Developing a strong and authentic talent brand helps build a pipeline of qualified candidates and helps differentiate your company from the competition.

This eBook was co-written by the teams at Greenhouse and Officevibe.

greenhouse

Greenhouse is the world's first recruiting optimization platform. Companies use Greenhouse to optimize how they find, interview and hire the best talent. From strategic sourcing to customizable interview kits, Greenhouse provides a technology platform that helps organizations of all sizes improve their recruiting performance. Find better candidates, conduct more focused interviews, and make data-driven hiring decisions using Greenhouse.

officevibe

Officevibe helps companies measure and improve their company culture through short and fun pulse surveys. Their unique one question a week approach aggregates employees' anonymous responses, in order to provide a real-time dashboard for managers to see where problems may lie. The system automatically makes recommendations on how to improve based on the data collected. Employees are also encouraged to submit written feedback, which is used to inform recommendations.