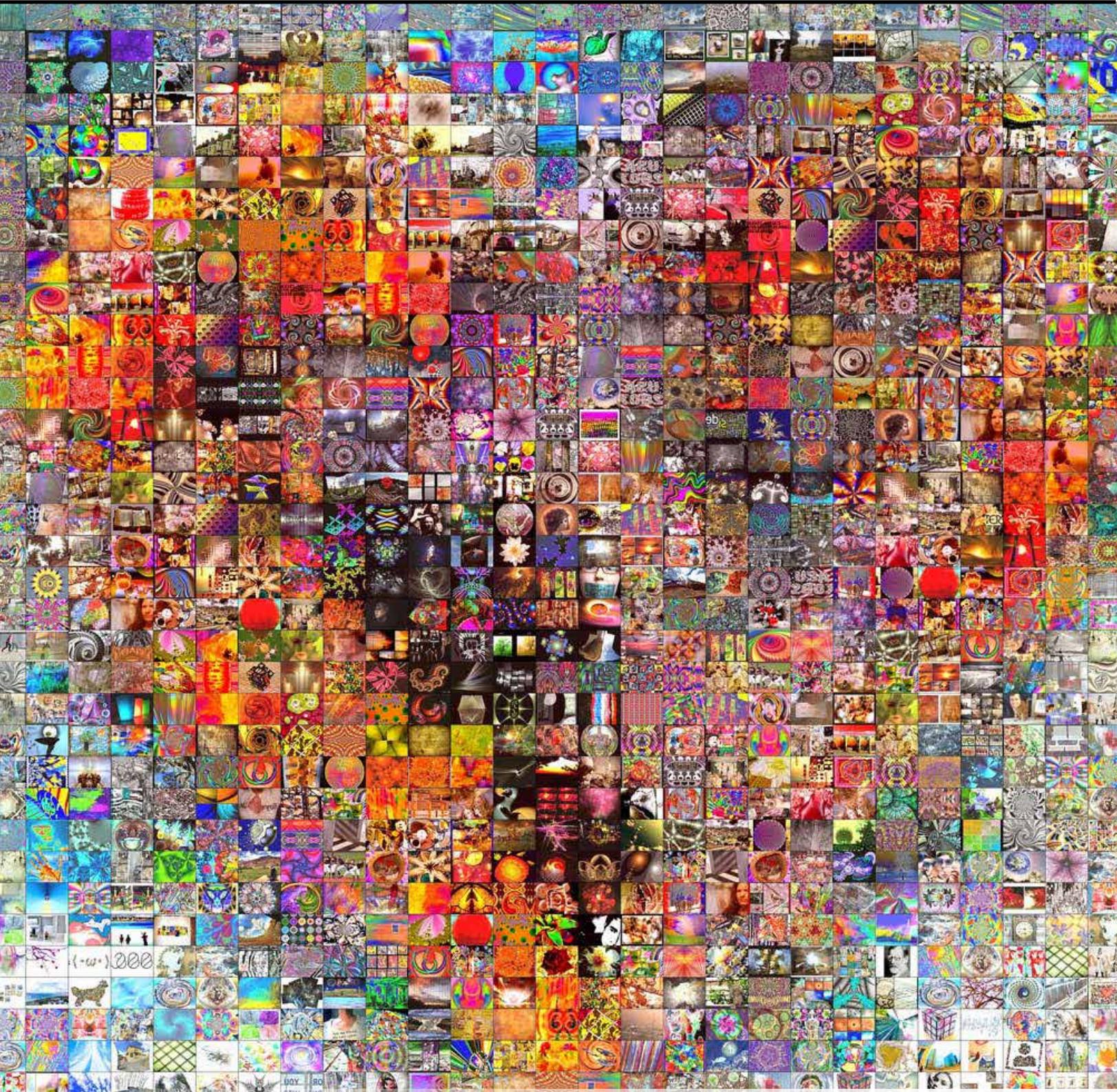


GET TO THE HEART OF IT

Developing Your Employer Brand



DEVELOPING YOUR EMPLOYER BRAND

Developing an employment brand is a large and important undertaking for any organization, but if the project is to be successful, it must not be a single event—it must be an ongoing process that lives and breathes with the dynamics of your company. While you should conduct periodic reviews to understand the current state of your employer brand, the brand itself will continue to develop with each contact your organization makes with its people, its partners, and its market. Every phone call with a customer strengthens or weakens your brand, as does every email sent to an applicant, every form viewed by a candidate, and every tweet read by your Twitter followers.

The purpose of this document is to help you understand the state of your current employer brand and to help you to take preliminary steps towards reshaping, maintaining, and managing the employer brand that you ultimately desire.

The Process

EMPLOYER BRAND DISCOVERY PROCESS

INPUT: Building Blocks

OUTPUT: Applications

INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

What?

Brand Territory

Essential Equities

Core Values

Who

Personality/Voice/Feel

Leveragable Assets

Proof Points/Properties

DISTILLATION

IMPLEMENTATION

Internal Communications

Recruitment Communications

HR Business Decisions

**EMPLOYER
BRAND ESSENCE
STATEMENT**

Who Should Participate

While anyone can participate in the process of developing your employer brand, your initiative will only get traction if it includes the major stakeholders. Some people you might want to consider involving in the process include:

- V.P. and/or Director of Human Resources
- Corporate Brand Manager
- V.P. and/or Director of Communications and/or Marketing
- Senior Recruiters
- At least one “lower-level” employee to ensure the integrity of the process

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STEP 1: INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

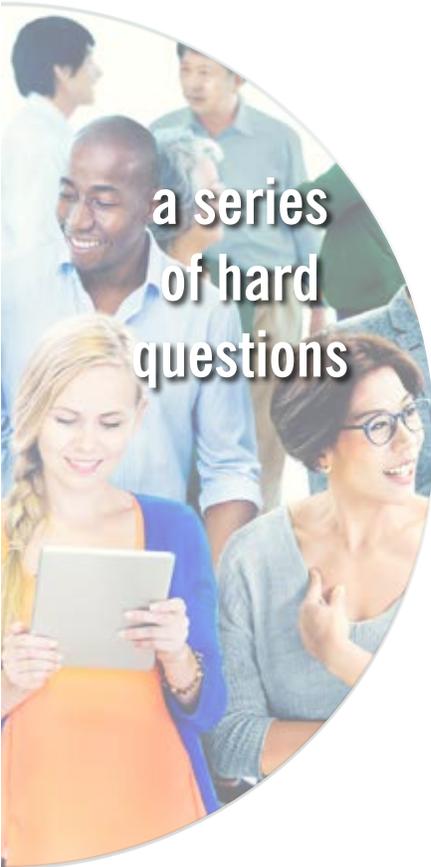
The first step of the process uncovers the context within which your employer brand must live. During this stage, your team will ask itself a series of hard questions whereby answers will become the Building Blocks out of which you will eventually distill the essence statement of your employer brand.

Employee Interviews

You'll want to conduct interviews with employees from all departments and levels of your company. Schedule time with everyone you can, from your CEO all the way down to the newest hire in the mailroom. The goal of your interviews is to understand, from a holistic perspective, what it means to work at your organization.

You should allow your interviewing process to be as organic as possible, but here are some questions that have been most successful for our clients:

- 1. Did you have any industry experience before coming to the company?**
This will help the team understand how much you'll have to educate the external audience about the realities of your industry.
- 2. How did you find the opportunity with the company?**
The answers to this question will be invaluable when you start developing the media strategy for rolling out your new employer brand.
- 3. What does a person have to do to be successful within our company?**
These answers can be read as your employees' advice to new hires or as the type of message that your employees think belong in the communication of your employer brand.
- 4. How would you describe our company as a person?**
This question will help you develop the voice of your employer brand. The answers will communicate the reality of the way your employees view the company and the different ways they relate to it.
- 5. What are the most important aspects of the employment relationship?**
You can use this information to understand what your candidates want from the employment relationship. It can also be used to help your managers understand what their direct reports require from them.
- 6. Where do we fall short as an employer?**
The team will use this data to bring a sense of honesty and challenge to your brand essence statement.
- 7. What are your future plans?**
Along with measuring the loyalty that the company has earned as an employer, the answers to this question will also help you understand the employees' sense of the career possibilities that are possible with the company. Additionally, you can use this data to help bring a sense of challenge to your brand essence statement.



Competitor Comparison

Assign a member of your team to conduct a brief survey of the career pages on your competitors' websites. You'll want to find the language that helps you understand:

- Your competitor's stated purpose as an organization (i.e., their mission statement)
- Your competitor's values
- Your competitor's key employment messages
- The reasons why an individual would choose to work there

This information will give you an overall perspective of the various messages that candidates in your industry are subject to, and it will reveal the potential openings in the market that your messages might target.

If your company performs onboarding or exit interviews, you may want to collect that data (anonymous data is fine) to help you understand why your employees and/or former employees chose your company over your competitors, or why they left you for them.

Step 2: The Building Blocks

The Building Blocks of your Employer Brand Essence Statement will identify the context in which your employment brand lives and the characteristics that differentiate it in the employment marketplace, characteristics that can be uniquely leveraged by your company and your company alone.

To construct your Building Blocks, the team will need to conduct a series of intensive work sessions, where you'll categorize and synthesize the information you collected during the Backgrounding process to reveal the essential elements at the heart of your brand. The Building Blocks are structured as questions, with each one containing a series of smaller questions of which answers you will use to construct your final understanding of the block.

Block 1: What kind of employer are you?

1. **In what categories do you compete?**
2. **What are the dynamics of those categories?**
3. **What is required to be a leader in those categories?**
4. **Where must your company continue to build its competencies?**

When answering these questions, remember that categories speak not only to industries in which you sell your products or services, but also to the categories in which you compete for candidates.

For example, a company that provides home healthcare services may think that its categories are limited to the healthcare markets, but if it requires a team of IT professionals to help maintain its hardware and software applications, then it also competes against any company that requires an IT team. Honest and thoughtful answers to the above questions would help such a company understand what it needs to do to succeed among its true competition.



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Block 2: What do you stand for as an employer?

1. What are your core values?
2. What is your employment DNA?
3. What is at the heart of your employment promise?

The differences between these questions are subtle. The first question speaks not only to your employment values, but to the values that go into everything your company does, from its charity work to the way it designs its website. Everyone who interacts with your company—each customer, employee, applicant, stockholder, etc.—should be able to identify with the core values you espouse.

The second question asks you to discover the single ingredient that absolutely must be included in all of your employment offerings. It defines the limit and potential of your brand.

The third question will help your team turn your core values and employment DNA into the promises your company can faithfully make to potential employees. The promise(s) you arrive at should not be able to be doubted by anyone, including any former employees who may have left under negative circumstances. These should be the promises you could stake your company on.

Block 3: Who are you as an employer?

1. How does your company relate to its employees?
2. What is your company's personality?
3. What is its voice?
4. What is its look and feel?

To be successful with the third Building Block, your team must be willing to get a little creative. You'll want each answer to use strong adjectives, because this building block will be used as the standard against which you can judge the final form of your employer Brand Essence Statement and the communications materials that are just one strata of its output.

Additionally, you'll be able to provide the answers to this Building Block to whatever creative team is responsible for developing your recruitment communications materials, which will help save everyone a lot of time and money on the back-and-forth process that encumbers the development of any creative campaigns.



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Block 4: Leveragable Assets

1. What properties does your company already own?
2. What are the perceptual equities that your team wishes to bring forward into the future?

The answer to these questions could be as simple as your company's color scheme, logo, and tagline. Or it might include contracts with celebrity spokespeople, awards you might have won, or creative themes that have resonated with your target audiences.

In short, the answers to the fourth Building Block will connect your employer brand to the already-existing perception of who your company is and what it has to offer. The fourth Building Block is the bridge between your brand's past and future.

Step 3: The Essence of Your Employer Brand

After you've constructed the Building Blocks, the team will want to continue its series of intensive work sessions to create a single statement that will contain the essence of your employer brand.

The challenge of these sessions will be to arrange the Building Blocks into a single sentence that is more than the sum of its parts. While you should be able to trace each phrase in the sentence to specific piece of data that you uncovered during the employee interviews, the competitor comparison, or during the formation of the Building Blocks, the sentence itself should be strong enough to stand on its own.

It will behoove you to allow this part of the process to be professionally and respectfully contentious, with the sentence forming itself, bit by bit, through a rigorous process that involves a serious challenge and defense. When your employer Brand Essence Statement is complete, every single member of the team should have no doubts about its strength and integrity—because if someone on your team doubts it, then the marketplace will too.

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STEP 4: PUBLIC EXPRESSIONS

The fourth step in the process involves developing a series of expressions that represent the more tangible and targeted applications of the employer Brand Essence Statement. Because the essence statement is for internal use only, the public expressions help convey the various ways your employer brand can be interpreted for its various needs.

You can think of these less as deliverables and more as creative exercises. If your Brand Essence Statement cannot be formulated into a series of public expressions, then you might want to consider going back to Step 3 and trying again.

The Single Ownable Idea

Your single ownable idea should be an expression that, once you make it, no other company can claim as its own. It should be comparable to Apple's "Think Different," or Verizon's "Can You Hear Me Now?," a single expression that can serve almost as the auditory equivalent of your company's logo. The trick, though, is to come up with something memorable that also conveys the essence of your employer brand.

The Elevator Speech

Now that your team understands the essence of the brand, try to formulate a brief explanation of who the company is and what it stands for as an employer. Think of it in terms of an elevator speech, a 15-second answer to the question, "What's it like to work at your company?" The speech should not only convey key data about your company's employment offering, but it should do so in the voice of your employer brand.

The Employee Banner

The Employee Banner should be able to serve as the internal rallying cry of your company. It should be powerful enough to inspire and pithy enough to fit on a T-shirt. When your employees hear it or read it, they should not only say, "Yes, that's who we are," but also, "Yes, that's who we want to be."

STEP 5: ROLL OUT THE BRAND

The brand roll-out does not need to be a major event; in fact, the process is better served if you implement and assess it over time. The first step is to conduct a survey of all the touch points that will strengthen or weaken your employer brand. While the touch points will be different for each company, the following list will help get you started:

- The career pages on your corporate website and intranet
- The forms used during the application process
- Any automated responses that get generated during the application process
- The live touchpoints during the interview process
- Recruiting collateral: brochures, job fair booths, flyers, job postings, etc.
- Executive communications to the employee base
- Company policy explanations
- Training materials
- Benefits materials
- Paycheck stuffers
- Auto-signatures in company emails, voicemail scripts, etc.
- Annual reports

STEP 6: MONITOR & REVISE

As we mentioned at the beginning of this white paper, developing your employer brand is not a single event. It's a constantly evolving process that must be monitored if it is to be maintained.

Monitor Your Materials

Assign a member of your team to serve as your materials monitor. Ask this person to conduct monthly audits of the employer-brand touch points to ensure that any new or revised materials stay true to who your company is and what it stands for as an employer.

Monitor Your Competitors

Ask another member of your team to be responsible for conducting quarterly audits of what your major competitors are doing. This person should survey the competitors' career pages to see if they've made any updates to their employment offering. They should be able to make recommendations based on the findings of the survey. For example, they should be able to understand whether your competitors' changes signal an impending encroachment upon the unique employment space your company has claimed for itself and be able to recommend strategic adjustments in the form of your brand's expressions.

Monitor Your Employees

Assign a member of the team to conduct regular surveys with various employees of your company to ensure that the strength of your brand's Building Blocks remains sound. This person should report back to the team on a bi-annual basis, highlighting any data that might require revisions to the original Building Blocks. This person should also attempt to collect the results of onboarding and exit interviews, which often get to the heart of what attracted the employee to your company or sent/lured them away.

Revise Your Employer Brand Essence Statement

Ideally, the process you've just gone through has uncovered an employer brand that can weather the changing dynamics of your company, your industry, and the economy as a whole, but more realistically, the nature of your employer brand will evolve based on further understanding of who your employer is and who it hopes to be; changes in your company's leadership, employee base, and market forces may also provoke the need for a revision.

By monitoring both the external and internal dynamics that affect the integrity of your employer brand, your team should be able to remain proactive, adjusting the Building Blocks, the Brand Essence Statement, and the expressions whenever the realities demand it.



a constantly
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WE CAN HELP

We would be remiss, of course, if we didn't tell you that RCI Recruitment Solutions can help you develop your employer brand. We've helped companies such as Sprint, Rent-A-Center, and Sankyo Pharma understand who they are as employers and how to communicate their message to both internal and external audiences.

Whether you want help with the whole process or just with a single step, we have the experience and the expertise to help.

For more information, go to www.rcirs.com/talent-management-services/employer-branding.

About RCI Recruitment Solutions

For almost 40 years, RCI Recruitment Solutions has helped clients hire the best possible candidates in the least possible time for the lowest possible costs. We've worked with thousands of companies, from small mom-and-pop stores to Fortune 500 multinationals, and we've learned that the only way to produce the results they need is to keep ourselves agile when it comes to developing a solution. Our long history provides us with a depth and breadth of experience to help any organization improve their talent management. We offer our clients the gamut of recruitment products and services, from strategic media planning to award-winning recruitment communications development to one-off sourcing projects to full recruitment process outsourcing. But our resources are not just the products and services we offer. They also include our knowledgeable and experienced staff, all of whom utilize their expertise to develop holistic strategies for our customers.

When it comes to recruitment solutions, your vendor should be able to do many things at once and do each of them well.

So, that's exactly what we do. For more information, visit www.rcirs.com.

