



The 2025 Employer Branding & Recruitment Marketing Playbook





Introduction

Organizations that simply post open jobs and wait for applicants are falling behind in the increasingly competitive talent market. The best candidates available don't just want any job. They want to be part of a great organization where they're happy and fulfilled by their work. And they won't apply until they're confident you offer what truly matters to them.

Forward-thinking recruiting teams are embracing a more proactive approach by focusing on employer branding and recruitment marketing. This powerful combination positions your organization as the preferred destination for the best and brightest, and ensures your job opportunities reach the right candidates.

In this playbook, you'll learn everything you need to know to craft a compelling employer brand and winning recruitment marketing strategy, including :



Steps for building an employer brand that resonates with your ideal candidates



How to create a modern career site that attracts top talent



Recruitment marketing tactics for connecting with candidates and generating larger talent pools



How to use AI and automation to drive your employer branding and recruitment marketing strategies

Modern hiring by the numbers

53%

of recruiters report that job boards are becoming less effective

61%

of recruiters indicate that candidates are expecting more from hiring teams

73%

of recruiters say employee referrals are their top source of qualified candidates

62%

of recruiters expect to hire more this year

54%

of recruiters say candidate drop-off is their top challenge

48%

of recruiters say sourcing is the most time-consuming stage of the hiring process

50+%

of recruiters report that time-to-hire, cost-per-hire, and drop-off have all increased in the past year

*Data collected from Sense & CandE Benchmark Research surveys

01

**Create an employer
brand that makes your
organization stand out to
top talent**



In the world of marketing, there is a concept known as “brand affinity.” It’s when consumers don’t just seek out products or services that are cheap and convenient, they buy from companies that they’re genuinely enthusiastic about.

Employer branding takes this concept and applies it to recruiting. It’s the process of

building a reputation for your organization that makes it a desirable place to work. Instead of candidates stumbling upon your job openings, you organically attract the right people by creating a brand that highlights everything great about being part of your team.

In this section, we’ll unpack everything that goes into creating an employer brand



Provide a positive employee experience

A credible employer brand stems from the experiences of your employees. Happy employees become advocates for your organization by sharing their experiences online and recommending your job opportunities to the talented people they know. And conversely, dissatisfied employees damage your brand and discourage candidates from applying to your organization.

Creating exceptional experiences for every employee is the key to a standout employer brand, but that's no easy feat. Each employee's journey is unique, so consistent check-ins are crucial to understanding their perspectives and tailoring positive experiences for everyone.

Provide a positive candidate experience

Similar to employees, the candidates you interact with during the hiring process also have the potential to shape your employer brand. That's why it's crucial to treat every one of them with respect, whether it's someone you hire for a senior-level role or a candidate for a junior position who didn't make it past the application stage.

In today's digital age, candidates are quick to share their experiences with hiring companies online. And, unfortunately, it's most often the negative experiences people feel compelled to share.

CandE Benchmark Research surveyed 240,000 global candidates and found that only 26% of North American candidates and 21% of EMEA candidates reported having a positive experience with hiring companies. Using AI-powered recruiting automation, talent-centric recruiting teams are providing personalized experiences at each stage of the candidate journey, helping them meet their hiring goals and build a respected employer brand.



Use AI to identify employee and candidate satisfaction trends

Surveys help talent teams gain insight into employee and candidate sentiment. However, extracting actionable takeaways from surveys has always been challenging. Especially, when the organization employs hundreds or thousands of people and has countless candidates under consideration for multiple roles.

Talent teams can now leverage AI to generate comprehensive summaries of engagement survey results. This allows them to pinpoint the trends that are having the greatest overall impact on employee happiness and candidate experience so they can take the right action.

Create candidate persona profiles

Understanding the needs and preferences of your ideal candidates helps you form an employer brand that appeals to the right talent. By going through the process of creating candidate persona profiles for the roles you commonly hire for, you can learn what compels your target audience to move forward with a job opportunity.

Candidate persona profiles should broadly highlight the professional backgrounds, motivations, and engagement methods of the candidates you typically connect with. However, you want to be careful not to make any assumptions when creating profiles. Instead, gather information from interviews with current employees and hiring managers, candidate surveys, industry reports, and relevant professional groups.

Candidate persona profiles provide a snapshot of the talent you hope to hire, helping you create a standout employer brand and ultimately attract the right people.

Map out the candidate journey

Mapping out the typical candidate journey not only helps you optimize your recruiting strategy. It also empowers you to refine your employer brand. By understanding each step a candidate takes—from initial awareness to application and beyond—you can provide a compelling experience at every stop along the way.

Start by identifying every stage where a candidate interacts with your brand. Then work to understand how you can engage them at each specific touchpoint. What are their motivations and expectations? What frustrations or roadblocks do they encounter? What actions does your recruiting team take to provide a positive candidate experience?

Leverage surveys, interviews, and recruiting analytics to gather insightful data and create a detailed candidate journey map. This strategic exercise helps you tailor your recruiting strategy to your target audience and create an employer brand that they interact with at each stage of their journey.

Ready to gain deeper insight into your candidates? Check out the candidate persona profile and journey map templates at the end of the playbook.

Craft an Employee Value Proposition

Now it's time to translate everything great about working for your organization into a concise pitch to share with job seekers. This is called your Employee Value Proposition (EVP) and it will be the core of all your employer brand messaging.

Start by understanding what your current employees love about being part of your team. Then highlight the tangible initiatives and perks you offer, such as diversity and inclusion programs, work-life balance, or career growth opportunities. Really try to distill what sets your organization apart into 1-3 powerful sentences.

Crafting an EVP might seem simple but it's easy to miss the mark. Two things to remember: be authentic and specific. Don't make exaggerated claims and avoid generic, jargon-filled messaging.

Promote employee advocacy

Job seekers crave authenticity. They want to hear what it's really like to work for your organization from your actual employees. By encouraging your employees to be vocal advocates, your brand messaging will have credibility and reach a wider audience.

Start by asking them to share their positive experiences. Many job seekers look at Glassdoor or search social media so positive reviews and anecdotes will get them excited about the idea of joining your team. Then create a variety of content featuring your happy employees (we'll cover this in more detail throughout this playbook). These authentic employee perspectives provide a glimpse into your organizational culture and validate your EVP and employer brand messaging.



Ask an expert

Five employer branding tips

Change State is a leading employer branding and recruitment marketing agency that helps clients with HR tech selection, talent insights research, programmatic advertising, and more



Martin Predd

Co-Founder



1 - We don't own our employer brand. Our candidates and employees do!

A common misconception among recruiters is that an employer brand is something we **"own"** or **"create."** In reality, employer brands are based on the *perceptions* of candidates, current and previous employees, and the wider communities in which we operate.

2 - As a recruiter, you are the face of your employer brand to the external talent market

Recruiters wear many hats. One of the most important is as the **"face"** of an organization's employer brand to the external talent market. Every action we take (or don't take) as recruiters is a reflection of our employer brand and will shape the perceptions of candidates, hopefully for the better.

3 - Authenticity means being honest. Tricking prospective employees hurts us all in the end

Too often, employer branding is treated as a tactic instead of a strategy. A tactic can be thought of as a specific action designed to address an immediate problem (e.g., trying to fill roles as quickly as possible by blasting generic, unauthentic messaging to every candidate). A more strategic approach is to engage the right candidates and be radically honest about what it's like to work for your organization—so you hire the right people and retain them for a long time.

4 - Our employer brand lives throughout the talent lifecycle, not merely in recruiting

When we think of an employer brand, we are often rightly focused on candidates. And while recruiters are arguably one of the most important "faces" of an employer brand (see tip #2), we're only one touchpoint in a larger system that impacts the brand. Hiring managers, benefits administrators, the wider HR function, marketing, department heads, leadership, and many others all shape the perceptions talent has of your organization.

5 - Employer brand building is a marathon, not a sprint

Fostering a strong employer brand takes time and buy-in from leadership. And one or both of these can be in short supply in many organizations. So the next time you're tasked with filling 100 seats as quickly as possible, don't be afraid to gently remind leadership that (while this can be done) it may not be in the long-term interest of the organization and its employer brand.

02

**Build a career site that
showcases your employer
brand and attracts top talent**

Your career site is where your employer brand comes to life and potential candidates form a first impression of what it's like to work for your organization.



It's all about showcasing your unique work environment, the voices of your employees, and everything that you offer to your workforce (along with all your available jobs). There's a lot that goes into building a career site that gets job seekers excited about the idea of joining your team.

In this section, you'll learn everything you need to know to build a stunning career site that attracts top talent.



Display all your available jobs

The purpose of your career site is ultimately to generate applicants so you need to list all your available jobs. But there is more to it than that. Your site should have clear navigation and powerful search filters so candidates can easily discover roles they're a match for.

They should then be able to seamlessly apply from any device, through a user-friendly application process. Remember, providing a positive candidate experience is important for your employer brand so make it as easy as possible for candidates to find the right job and submit an application.

Highlight your EVP and employer brand messaging

Your EVP should be prominently displayed above the fold on your career site. As soon as a job seeker lands on the site, you want to capture their attention by letting them know exactly why they should be excited to join your team.

Your supporting employer brand messaging should then be weaved through the rest of the page. For instance, you can share awards your organization has won, showcase employee initiatives and benefits, and provide insight into the hiring process. We'll explore each of these specific examples of employer brand messaging in more detail later on.

Show photos of your employees at work

Bring your employer brand to life by including photos of your employees on your career site. Show them interacting with each other and customers in the workplace. If you're a remote company, you can include photos of team get-togethers, your employees working happily at home, or even a map of where everyone is located. Including visual components on your career site helps potential candidates connect with your organizational culture and envision themselves as a thriving employee.



Include awards and recognitions you've won

Like employee testimonials, awards and recognitions lend credibility to your employer brand. Display badges/logos for any awards that recognize the employee experience you offer (e.g., best companies to work for) or organizational success you've achieved (e.g., fast-growing companies). If you have favorable reviews on Glassdoor, include your average score and encourage job seekers to check out what employees and candidates have to say about you.

Include testimonials from happy employees

Let your employees be your brand ambassadors by including testimonials on your career site. These personalized perspectives show what your people truly love about being one of your employees. A quick, impactful quote can strike a chord with job seekers, while short videos provide insight into the day-to-day employee experience. Testimonials build on your employer brand messaging by adding authenticity that resonates with job seekers.



Provide insight into the hiring process

Many job seekers are hesitant to apply without a basic understanding of what to expect. Make sure your career site includes an overview of the types of interviews you conduct, how many candidates will be asked to participate in, and the estimated timeline for the end-to-end hiring process. By being transparent, you'll build trust with candidates from the get-go and reduce their anxiety throughout the hiring journey. By defining a consistent process and using it across all the roles you hire for, you'll provide the great candidate experiences needed to support your employer brand.

Optimize your career site for search engines

Many job seekers won't come directly to your career site. In fact, many start their search for a new job on Google. That means you need to make sure your career site is optimized for search engines and ranks high in the results for the keywords potential candidates use. Think of keywords like "jobs + your location," "hiring + your industry," as well as any specific terms related to the roles you hire for. Ensure your career page is optimized for these keywords and follows other SEO best practices, so you connect with qualified candidates who are actively searching for their next opportunity.

Make your career site mobile accessible

It shouldn't come as a surprise that about 90% of candidates use a mobile device during their job search. That of course means they should have a positive user experience when accessing your career site from their phone or tablet. But even more, they should be able to find the right job and apply from these devices. You want to offer a seamless journey that enables candidates to effortlessly engage with your brand and apply for the right job—and a mobile-accessible career site provides exactly that.

Ensure consistency with the rest of your website

Your career site should be an extension of your organization's primary website and brand. It should not only have the same look and feel. It should also have a URL that aligns with your main domain and the same functionality and usability as the rest of the website. This consistency delivers a positive experience to the job seekers who navigate to your career site from another page and strengthens your employer brand.

Launch a professional-looking career site in no time. Want to learn how Sense Career Sites will help you attract top talent, deliver an outstanding candidate experience, and elevate your employer brand? [Get in touch!](#)

Boost engagement on your career site with an AI chatbot

Including an AI chatbot on your career site is a great way to enhance the candidate experience and generate more applicants. It will instantly greet each candidate and learn who they are and what type of role they're looking for, while also answering their questions. Here's more on what it can do:

Job Matching – The chatbot will ask the candidate a series of questions and then present them with open roles they're a match for based on their responses.

Instant Apply – The chatbot will collect application details from the candidate and automatically create a profile in your ATS.

Smart FAQs – The chatbot will provide answers to questions about your organizational culture, benefits, or any other common inquiries a candidate has.

Pre-Screening – The chatbot will ask the candidate a few pre-screening questions and determine if they're a fit for the role they applied to.

Live Chat – The chatbot will route high-priority candidates to human recruiters based on availability and pre-defined workflows.

Interview Scheduling – If the candidate is a fit, the chatbot will present them with available days and times for an interview that they can select from.

03

**Proactively reach the
right talent with
recruitment marketing**



Throughout this playbook, we've explored strategies for crafting a compelling employer brand and promoting it on your career site. The next step is to ensure your brand reaches the right audience.

That's where recruitment marketing comes in. It's the strategy of actively promoting your employer brand and the roles you're hiring for.

By connecting with the right talent and engaging them with compelling messaging, you'll capture their interest, build a strong talent pipeline, and hire outstanding people who align with your organizational culture.

In this section, we'll dive into the different strategies that drive recruitment marketing success.



Source passive talent with targeted outreach

A strong employer brand goes a long way in getting the attention of candidates who aren't actively looking for a new job. But you first need to connect with these passive candidates on their preferred communication channel.

Text messaging has surpassed email as the most effective way to engage talent. Using recruiting automation, you can share available roles with entire groups of qualified candidates at once through personalized text messages. When a candidate replies and expresses interest, they'll be put directly in touch with a recruiter or an AI chatbot that will collect their application details and schedule an interview. Your initial message can include your EVP or you can direct candidates to more detailed content if they have questions about your organization.

Continuously nurture past candidates

Many organizations report that more than half of the candidates they hire are already in the database. By staying in touch with past candidates, you can build a strong network of potential hires for future roles.

With recruiting automation, you can send regular updates that keep your organization top of mind. In addition to the new roles you're hiring for, you can share company updates, event invites, recruitment marketing content, and even "happy birthday" messages for individual candidates. You can go as far as to segment your lists by location, types of roles, or other criteria so you ensure candidates only receive relevant messages. There are a lot of talented people in your database so stay connected and they'll be ready to join your team when the right opportunity presents itself.

Create recruitment marketing content

Using your employer brand messaging, you can craft a variety of detailed content that highlights the employee experiences you offer. Recruitment marketing content should be all-encompassing and touch on company news, awards, employee stories, and perks/benefits.

Content should also come in a variety of formats, including long-form blog posts, social media snippets, engaging videos, and visual graphics. It should live on your career site and be distributed through all the channels you use to attract candidates.

Meet job seekers at hiring events

Hiring events offer the opportunity to connect with job seekers in person and discuss what they're looking for and how your organization can provide it. During these conversations, you can share the roles you're hiring for that align with their background and provide insight into everything great about working for your organization.

Even more, you can use technology to elevate your presence at hiring events. QR code-accessible applications allow candidates to apply on the spot and instantly be scheduled for an interview if they're qualified. You can also collect contact information from other job seekers in attendance and continuously nurture them with automated messaging campaigns until they're ready to formally apply.

Collect referrals from your employees

A survey from Sense and The CandE Benchmark Research Program found that employee referrals are the top source of new hires. A referral program transforms your satisfied employees into brand ambassadors who are happy to connect you with the talented people they know.

Using recruiting automation, you can streamline the referral process and provide everyone involved with a great experience. Employees can submit a referral in seconds and log into the platform anytime to see where the referred candidate is at in the hiring process. You can also bring a gamification element to your referral process with leaderboards, point redemption, and awards so you boost employee engagement and encourage your team to recommend all the great people in their network.

Generate leads with custom landing pages

Get more out of your recruitment marketing campaigns by building custom landing pages with lead generation forms. These pages collect contact information from each candidate who engages with the campaign. For example, you can launch landing pages for hiring event registration, content downloads, or as a general hub for those who want to stay informed about your available roles.

Define rules that route each candidate to the right recruiter or automated engagement campaign based on the information they provide. With a platform like Sense, your recruiting team can easily create and launch pages without needing to have any coding or design skills.



Employer branding & recruitment marketing benefits



Attract top talent

Position your organization as a great place to work so top talent selects your opportunity over all their other options.



Shorten time-to-hire

Fill roles faster by making your organization a desirable place to work and always having a pool of eager candidates to engage.



Improve recruiter productivity

Automate recurring recruiting tasks and devote your time to more impactful work, like enhancing your brand and building relationships with great candidates.



Reduce hiring costs

Reduce your reliance on job boards and other sourcing channels by organically and proactively attracting qualified candidates.



Elevate the candidate experience

Consistently deliver an outstanding candidate experience so you reduce drop-off and continually attract qualified candidates.



Boost employee engagement and retention

Improve the employee experience to bring credibility to your employer brand and keep your team members happy and productive for a long time.

Candidate persona profile

Job Title & Summary

Candidate Background

Demographics

- Age range*
- Location
- Education level

Skills & experience

- Essential skills & experience required for the job
- Preferred skills & experience (nice-to-haves)
- Relevant certifications, licenses, and degrees

Soft skills

- Preferred work style (e.g., independent, collaborative, detail-oriented)
- Key personality traits (e.g., adaptable, enthusiastic, strong communicator)

Candidate Motivations

Goals & aspirations

- What does the candidate hope to achieve in their next role?
- What personal career goals do they have?
- How can your organization help them achieve their goals?

Challenges & fears

- What potential concerns might the candidate have about the role or your organization?
- What can you do to help them overcome their challenges and fears?

Values

- What benefits/perks does the candidate want in their next job?
- What type of organizational culture do they want to be part of?
- What excites them about their work? (e.g., tackling challenges, serving customers, making a difference in the world)

Candidate Engagement

Communication preferences

- How does the candidate prefer to get information and updates about jobs? (e.g., text message, phone, career site)

Information sources

- Where does the candidate go to find job opportunities and information relevant to their career? (e.g., job boards, events, professional groups)

Messaging

- What high-level messaging resonates with the candidate?

Candidate persona profile template

| | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| Job Title & Summary | | |
| Candidate Background | | |
| Demographics | Skills & experience | Soft skills |
| | | |
| Candidate Motivations | | |
| Goals & aspirations | Challenges & fears | Values |
| | | |
| Candidate Engagement | | |
| Communication preferences | Information sources | Messaging |
| | | |

Candidate journey map

| Job Title | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Candidate Journey Stages | |
| Stage | Description |
| Awareness | How does the candidate first learn about your organization and job opportunities? (e.g., job boards, social media, employee referrals) |
| Research | What information does the candidate review about your organization and the role before applying? (e.g., career page, Glassdoor reviews, social media conversations) |
| Application | What steps are involved in the application process? (e.g., resume submission, cover letter requirement, work samples) |
| Assessment | How do you evaluate the candidate's qualifications? (e.g., pre-screening questions, phone screening, resume review) |
| Interview | What is the interview process like? (e.g., one-on-one interviews, panel interviews) |
| Offer | How do you present the job offer and negotiate terms? (e.g., written offer letter, salary discussion, benefits breakdown) |
| Onboarding | How do you welcome and prepare the new hire for their start date? (e.g., new hire paperwork, day one instructions, training sessions) |
| Candidate Journey Stages | |
| Touchpoints | Identify all the ways the candidate interacts with your organization at each stage (e.g., job posting, recruiter communication, employer branding content, employee reviews) |
| Candidate needs & expectations | What are the candidate's goals and concerns at each stage? (e.g., understanding job details, feeling valued, receiving timely updates) |
| Recruiting team action | What actions do you take to engage with candidates at each touchpoint? (e.g., clear job descriptions, streamlined applications, automated screening/interview scheduling, prompt communication) |
| Pain points | What are the potential challenges or frustrations candidates might encounter? (e.g., clunky application process, long hiring process, lack of communication) |
| Timeline | Estimate the number of days for each stage and the overall candidate journey |
| Metrics | Identify relevant metrics to track at each stage (e.g., drop-off, application completion rate, first-day no shows) |

Candidate journey map template

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Job Title | |
| Candidate Journey Stages | |
| Stage | Description |
| Awareness | |
| Research | |
| Application | |
| Assessment | |
| Interview | |
| Offer | |
| Onboarding | |
| Candidate Journey Stages | |
| Touchpoints | |
| Candidate needs & expectations | |
| Recruiting team action | |
| Pain points | |
| Timeline | |
| Metrics | |

Meet & exceed your talent acquisition goals with Sense

Sense, the leader in AI-powered Talent Engagement, redefines the recruitment process by seamlessly blending personalized, omnichannel candidate experiences with enhanced recruiter efficiency. Trusted by over 1,000 organizations, Sense offers a comprehensive suite of features, including Recruiting Automation, Talent CRM, Career Sites, Campaigns, Candidate Scoring & Matching, AI Chatbot, Text Messaging, Interview Scheduling, and Referrals. Optimize every step of the talent acquisition journey with Sense, where cutting-edge technology converges with intuitive functionality.



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