New media recruiting

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Using content and social media to connect to top talent
When it comes to hiring top, in-demand talent—STEM professionals, digital-media experts, and a host of other high-value roles your organization relies on to innovate and compete—companies can't stick with a business-as-usual attitude.
More than half of US CEOs point to a shortage of skills as a potential threat to growth in 2013.

(2013 PWC CEO SURVEY)

75 percent of human-capital professionals believe the talent shortage negatively affects their business.

(The Conference Board)²

² http://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=5156
EXPLAINS BOB MORITZ, U.S. chairman and senior partner of PwC, “Every business executive I have met with over the past three years has expressed the same challenges: finding qualified talent, retaining them and maximizing their potential.”

Far from being a short-term problem, the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) projects the current imbalance in supply and demand will persist. By 2020, reports MGI, “there will be a shortfall of as many as 40-million workers that are tertiary educated, and a surplus of 90-million to 95-million workers with mid-level and low-level skills.” Unless you’re hiring for Apple, Google or some other iconic brand, attracting knowledge workers won’t be easy for many years to come.

Here’s the good news: your competition is almost certainly not exploiting content and social media to the fullest extent possible—and these tools offer a critical edge when recruiting high-value knowledge workers. While marketers have been sprinting to master new media skills, most HR professionals are still struggling to adapt to the changing landscape.

This eBook is a proverbial shot-in-the-arm, intended to help HR executives and recruiters understand what it takes to leverage the latest networking and online engagement tools, and get out in front of your peers. We’ll offer the “why” and “how” of employer branding in a new media environment by looking at the adaptions marketers have made in the last five years. We’ll also look at innovative recruiting strategies that use new media to attract and engage knowledge workers.

3 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bob-moritz/americas-talent-gap_b_2080162.html
Employer branding: a good idea, flawed execution

From talent tactician to talent strategist

Content is your new social currency

An introduction to SEO

Content cases

Where to begin?
Employer branding: a good idea, flawed execution
As the talent shortage increases, HR is under tremendous pressure to deliver top-quality talent.

And in recent years, a strong employer branding program has come to be seen as mission-critical for global companies on the hunt for talent. Essentially, HR took a cue from marketing and applied branding principles to burnish their employers’ reputations. Along came dedicated employment microsites, and plenty of “day in the life” narratives and videos, among dozens of other tactics.

While well intentioned, many employer branding programs are reading off a marketing playbook that’s now ten years old. Employer branding efforts often come across as more gloss than substance, more “how we would like to be perceived” than “who we really are.”

**EMPLOYER BRANDING FAIL**

While some organizations are doing good work with employer branding, many more are producing mixed results. In an effort to appear hip and exciting to prospective employees (and let’s face it, a lot of employer branding is targeted to Gen Y graduates), too many companies do silly things to get attention. Near ubiquitous “day in the life” videos and diaries that are usually nothing more than sugar-coated, heavily scripted marketing speak.

While experimentation is important, you need to understand why you are doing something before you embark on it. Ask yourself, what particular area(s) of expertise am I searching for, where will I find people with those skills online, and what will I talk about with them? Armed with information, you’ll be in a much better position to develop employer branding messages and channels that make sense.
The problem is that in the social-media age, your employer reputation isn’t what you say it is. Your employer reputation is what your employees, alums, competitors and anyone with a strong opinion says it is. (Don’t believe me? Browse your company listing on Glassdoor.com, where employees, alumni and job candidates share information about what it’s like to work for your organization.)

Ten years ago, HR and recruiters sat in the power seat, controlling the flow of information between job candidates and hiring companies. While sites like Monster.com had been around for more than a decade, these were little more than digital bulletin boards.

**UNDERSTAND YOUR BRAND’S TALENT ATTRACTION**

LinkedIn’s Talent Brand Index capitalizes on the company’s 175+ million members to understand your brand’s global reach and engagement. In other words, sorting through its fifteen-billion interactions that take place on its platform each year, LinkedIn analyzes Big Data to figure out just how influential your brand is (if you’re a numbers geek, it’s engagement divided by reach).

Not impressed? Consider this: LinkedIn can tailor its insights to your specific company and a strategic area of study. For example, how do you stack up against your competitors? What's your index rating in the European pharma industry? How has your engagement and reach changed over time? By honing in on details like these, you can track your employer brand’s influence in critical markets and disciplines over time.

Essentially, it won’t be long before LinkedIn is to talent what Google is to business. And guess what fuels your brand’s influence and recognition. Yup, content.
With the advent of social media, candidates no longer have to rely on a recruitment company to find answers to their questions. Instead, they speak to your employees and alumni (not just those they know but complete strangers across the globe). They research your competitors and find out about your reputation on issues they care about most. They potentially arrive at interviews with a much deeper knowledge of what it’s like to work for your organization. Candidates have dozens of ways to find out what it’s like to work for your company—your employer microsite is just one.

Employer branding programs that try too hard to control your brand’s image—or worse, project an image that doesn’t match reality—simply aren’t effective. Instead, you should be thinking like a marketer, asking “what do we really stand for as an organization?” “What is our employee culture?” “How can we best show off these assets?”

The very best employee branding programs focus on showing rather than telling.
From talent tactician to talent strategist
It’s time to think about the problem like a marketer. 
To be specific, like a content marketer.

In the last five years, marketers learned to adapt to a more interactive, iterative conversation with 
their customers. Rather than focusing on “push” marketing (e.g. advertising), marketers now focus 
more on “pull” marketing (e.g. blogging, ebooks, magazines, social media, events, etc).

Pull marketing assumes a few truths:

• **Customers are in charge.** Brands can no longer control the message and the medium. 
  Instead, they must understand their customers’ behavior online to match their interests.

• **Brands must serve up online content that’s interesting, enlightening, inspiring or 
  entertaining.** Talking about how great you are is not interesting—it’s dull.

• **Social media is an important way to help relationships mature over time** and to stay in 
  touch with customers and prospects.

• **Strong relationships take time.** None of these strategies will work overnight.

What does all this have to do with recruiting?
The same lessons apply to recruiting:

• **The most sought-after candidates have their pick of employers.** In order to recruit these professionals, you will have to understand what motivates them and what they look for in a potential employer. You are now wooing rather than being wooed.

• **Use content and social media to nurture a relationship with candidates** (whether active or passive). Don’t think about your role in recruiting only as transactional (e.g. “I must find candidate A to fill job B.”); you now must also think strategically and long-term (e.g. “I will build my network to engage potential candidates over a longer period for future jobs that may or may not be available at this time.”). Find out what questions your job candidates ask most often, and tailor your online content to answer these questions.

• **Knowledge workers are social media power users,** and social media networks are an excellent way to engage job candidates, answer questions, and publicize open positions.

• **When recruiting top talent, think beyond your open positions available today.** Of course, you will still spend lots of time hiring for specific jobs, but you must also spend time recruiting candidates who are not yet looking for jobs (i.e. passive candidates) for open positions that do not yet exist. Think of your recruiting efforts in both the short term and long term.
content is your new social currency
If it’s true that heavy-handed promotion and self-congratulatory branding are no longer effective to woo high-value knowledge workers, what’s your other option?

Again, let’s turn to how marketers use content to engage their audiences. Consider these big-brand examples:

- **ENTERTAINMENT**: With over 5,000 videos, 50,000 photos, a print magazine, feature films—not to mention massive influence and coverage across digital and broadcast channels—Red Bull has mastered entertaining, adrenaline-pumping, extreme-sports content.

- **INSPIRATION**: GE blends information and entertainment to illustrate the exciting technologies the brand is building for the future.

- **EDUCATION**: Big-four accounting firm PwC knows how to connect with its C-level audience using original research. The firm’s annual CEO survey is a bellwether of executive attitudes and expectations. After publishing the survey each year, the firm spends a full twelve months talking with its audience about the results and implications.
Red Bull, GE and PwC have all evolved their marketing strategies and use interesting, educational or inspiring content to reach their customers. And this tactic is used successfully by brands both big and small—and it can be equally powerful in the hands of HR.

If you are intent on developing longer-term relationships with future job candidates, you need something to talk about besides your own company. Seems like a simple idea, but so few organizations do this well that it bears repeating. Brands focused on attracting high-value talent, as well as staying in touch with “passive” job seekers, must figure out how to engage in a conversation with job seekers. And the best way to do that is not to keep repeating how incredible your company is as an employer. The best way to stay in touch is to educate, inspire and entertain.

A STRONG CONTENT MARKETING PROGRAM FOR YOUR EMPLOYER BRAND WILL:

- Position your company (and the experts you choose to highlight) as thought leaders in your industry. Future job candidates will want to join your organization not because you tell them how forward-thinking your company is, but rather because you show it to be true. Content is a great way to do this. Recruiters who use content to stay in touch with their network of job candidates and influencers are a more welcome connection than those who only have one thing on their mind: filling slots.

- Even individual recruiters have a personal brand. Content marketing not only elevates the organization, but also because when members of your network share your content, it widens your reach. Content distributed through social channels gives you a multiplier effect.

A strong content marketing program will drive traffic to your website. This will happen not only due to the keywords you use (more on that below), but also because when members of your network share your content, it widens your reach.
An introduction to SEO
No conversation about “pull” tactics can be complete without mentioning search engine optimization (SEO).

SEO is the process of fine-tuning your content to ensure you are “found” online. Common tactics include choosing effective keywords and phrases, and sharing content through social networks, both of which boost your SEO rankings. While most companies focus significant attention on SEO to attract potential customers, few use the tactics to get jobs in front of the right candidates. But make no mistake, the rules of SEO apply just as well to recruiting.

Here’s what recruiters need to understand about SEO: as SEO became more advanced, marketers learned how to game the system, using all kinds of tactics and tricks to elevate their websites above competitors’. In an effort to level the playing field and reward quality over trickery, Google has introduced a number of algorithm updates to improve the quality of Google searches by prioritizing high-quality content from reputable sources.

And here’s where it gets interesting: Google prioritizes content with high engagement scores (e.g. comments and shares). In other words, Google judges relevance by how much traction your content gets in social circles.
It may be a simple idea but I can’t emphasize it enough: your company and your jobs will be “found” by a wider audience if you produce content worth sharing. Great, interesting, relevant, exciting content that other people are inspired to share with their networks. [Hint: it’s unlikely your static promotional content on your employer website will prompt a lot of sharing.]

Google will also favor you in search rankings if your audience (e.g. followers) is larger and highly engaged with your content. It’s not enough to simply produce good content. You also have to support interaction with and around that content.

**THE TAKEAWAYS:** In order for your employer brand and jobs to be “found” online, you need (a) interesting content and (b) a large, engaged social network.
Content

Cases
Among the most talked about employer brands is Rackspace, a global IT hosting company that takes a refreshing approach to employer branding. Rackspace felt strongly that if it could capture and communicate what it was like to work there—or to be a “Racker,” as employees call themselves—it would go a long way toward “pulling” job candidates in rather than “pushing” job listings out.

Rather than pitch the culture to all potential job candidates, Rackspace set out to attract only those who would fit in. Michael Long, then head of global employment branding initiatives, explains, “The most engaged and longest-lasting contributors to our organizations are the ones who fit within our culture. Our goal should be to accurately depict ourselves.”

Rackspace followed the mantra of “show” rather than “tell.” The company launched RackerTalent.com, a site dedicated to giving Rackspace employees the chance to define the workplace. It includes a blog written by 60 Racker contributors from four continents. And rather than oversee and micromanage entries, Rackspace gives significant leeway to writers to express themselves, answer questions, and document special events.

Rackspace’s unique voice as an employer brand has won the company many awards and accolades, and with each one, the company’s network and name recognition widens.
**RedBalloon: Mighty Employer Brand + Content = Reach.**

RedBalloon is an Australian company that offers customers the chance to gift experiences, from a hot-air balloon ride to cooking lessons or rally driving. Since the company’s birth, founder Naomi Simson has focused on talent—and specifically, offering a strong sense of culture and identity to retain the very best talent. Naomi explains, “Right now it’s not that hard for RedBalloon to find talent. That’s because we’ve done a lot of work on our employer brand. It wasn’t always so easy though. The only way to attract talent is to make people believe in what you are doing.”

The company has won numerous employer awards, including being listed in the top fifty of Australia’s Business Review Weekly’s “Great Places to Work” five years in a row.

In addition to her role at RedBalloon, Simson is also a prolific and well-recognized blogger. Her writing has earned her over 130,000 LinkedIn followers and honors from numerous publications. She’s quick to point out, however, that she does not blog to promote her business. “There’s a big misconception about that,” says Simson. “I blog because through it I learn so much and meet so many interesting people. My blog is a repository for information, and a great way to share insights with the people around me. The blog helps them know what I’m up to and what’s going on in my head, but it’s not about pushing promotional messages. That’s where a lot of businesses get blogging and social media wrong.”

RedBalloon also launched a company blog to describe—in the words of employees—what it’s like behind the company’s big red door. Says Megan Bromley, employee experience manager, “We share real-world stories about what life is like at RedBalloon. It’s great for the employee brand, but we really do it because people get a lot of satisfaction from being in such a great workplace.”

Both blogs—despite claims to the contrary—offer the company a larger audience and stronger identity online among potential job candidates. In 2012, RedBalloon received approximately 2000 employment applications, and recently more than 250 responses to an entry-level communications assistant role—applications had to be closed within weeks to manage the sheer volume of interest. Says Bromley, “There’s an indirect correlation. Naomi is a great storyteller and she blogs to tell that story. But the size of her audience also means that when we publish a new opening, we get a much larger pool of applicants, including more candidates from outside Australia.”
Where to begin?
We've only dipped our toes in. For human resources executives, it can feel overwhelming to make some of the changes we've outlined here. Below we offer ways to begin using content and social media to connect to top talent.

**Segment your audience and set priorities.**

The biggest “newbie” mistake content marketers make is to try to engage a broad, diverse audience. Content and social media will only gain traction if it's customized to a particular audience. You’ll need to segment your audience and set priorities about which particular segments to focus on at the start. In your organization, which job candidates are most difficult to reach, yet most critical to your success? Those are the candidates you’ll likely want to engage first.

**Evaluate your internal resources.**

If you’re serious about using content to connect to high-value candidates, it’s best to rely on subject matter experts within your organization. For example, if software developers are key innovation drivers in your organization, you would be wise to identify internal developers who may enjoy blogging on a semi-regular basis. Before you begin to crank out content, take stock of who within your organization may be part of your informal team (and keep in mind they may not be—even likely won’t be—in HR or marketing).
Evangelize inside your organization.

To sign on internal experts, you’ll need to explain your content strategy in a coherent and compelling manner. Develop a “road show” for different areas of your organization to help them understand why you’re changing your tactics, and how they can help you succeed. Most importantly, spell out clearly how their contributions can advance their own interests as well. For example, if you’re in search of volunteer bloggers for your employment efforts, explain how their efforts will be rewarded, and what it means to the organization.

Don’t use social media to sell.

For some old-school marketers and HR executives, social media is simply a channel to promote job openings. Don’t take such a tactical approach. Remember: you’re aiming to develop longer-term relationships with your audience online. As you begin using social media, consider a mix of (a) promoting job openings, (b) distributing the content you publish, (c) sharing what interests you and pulls your attention. If your interests are focused solely on your own brand, all the effort will fall flat.
Join forces with marketing.

To succeed in remaking your employer brand, you’ll have to pull down the walls dividing HR from marketing (as well as IT, legal, and customer service). The best new-media strategies take an integrated approach, learning from and feeding off successes in other areas. Understand what your own marketing department is doing with respect to content marketing, and aim to join forces.