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Frontline Analysis by the MRINetwork Team of Global Search Experts

Employer Branding: What Are Your Employees Saying About the Company?

Employer branding has become increasingly important over the last few years as companies realize they need to better communicate their mission and culture, and be more transparent about business operations to attract top candidates and clients. The best companies strive to achieve recognition as an "employer of choice" where people aspire to work and employees never want to leave. As a result, a lot of emphasis is placed on creating and disseminating key messaging, actively engaging with social media followers and rolling out mobile websites to accommodate today's job seekers. While all of these things are important in driving a positive company image, one area that is frequently minimized is the employee work experience and the ability of employees to positively or negatively influence prospective candidates. As retention becomes more of a concern in the growing labor market, companies should be considering what their employees are saying externally and how it may be impacting the brand.

A recent article published by Staffing Industry Analysts asserts that a company is only as good as its last hire, because disgruntled employees have more platforms to discuss what they don't like about the company. "Although this may be difficult to accept, this is likely the reality businesses face," says Scott Bass, director of marketing for MRINetwork.

Imagine the scenario of a newly-hired consultant or temporary worker. The employee is extremely talented and accepts the role because of the opportunity to work with your company, which seems to have a great reputation. They soon regret their decision after being given a cramped workspace, being excluded from company meetings and being treated like a second-class citizen. Or consider an employee who has been with the company for years but becomes frustrated with lengthy management approvals and the inability to get things accomplished within the organization, which ultimately affects their personal performance. Both scenarios invite the opportunity for employees to disseminate negative information about the company.

If you think this type of negative feedback has little impact, think again. Negative employee comments should not be viewed as isolated conversations that might take place between colleagues

or between a candidate and a recruiter. Now employer review sites like Glassdoor.com are gaining popularity, presenting the opportunity for both current and previous employees to post negative, anonymous, online comments. Adds Bass, "Just as hiring managers check out a candidate's online presence before making a final decision, more prospective candidates are checking out your company in the same manner. The implication is that it's not only important to establish a sound marketing presence via company communication vehicles like the website and social media, but it's also critical to market to your employees, your unofficial brand ambassadors, who now have a greater ability to affect the company's reputation."

Bass provides the following tips to help avert negative reviews from employees:

Identify and empower employees who have the potential to be brand ambassadors. Develop marketing campaigns where these employees can provide an inside view of the company. Monitor company review sites and social media pages, and respond back when possible to resolve any open issues.

Consistently let employees know they are the company's most valuable asset. Include them in important company decisions outside of their functional expertise, or it could even be as simple as bringing lunch in on a summer Friday, to show employees you appreciate their contributions.

Conduct annual surveys to find out how employees view the company and uncover areas for improvement. This will not only give you insight into what your employees think, but it will also show them that they are a part of shaping the company culture.

Treat contingent workers in the same manner as your permanent employees. Both types of workers have equal ability to build or crush your brand. Don't create "us vs. them" mentalities in the workplace which will lead to a more toxic culture.

In this era of organizational transparency and authenticity, the things employees are saying about the company can have a tremendous impact on how the business is viewed in the marketplace. Bass concludes, "Employees have the ability as brand ambassadors to deliver positive, genuine accounts of their work experiences, delivering the message that they trust the leadership of the executive team and they feel valued as an employee. Happy employees mean a strong culture, which ultimately will help companies achieve their overall goals."

