

## Attracting Talent with Public Relations

Public relations, or PR as it's often called, is something we've all heard of but what does it really mean? Frequently companies think that PR should be leveraged to promote company news; everything from new hire announcements, office openings and website launches, to new products or services, and mergers and acquisitions. While some of these events may be deemed newsworthy, PR is most powerful as a tool to raise a company's profile, communicate the brand and culture, and continually position internal experts as industry thought leaders. Most importantly, when public relations is leveraged effectively, employers can extend their ability to reach top candidates and attract them into their organizations. All too often, this is an opportunity that is missed when it comes to recruitment and hiring, because many companies only focus on archiving as many "look how great we are" press releases on their websites as they can.

So how does PR work and how can companies use it to entice top performers? Press releases are what most people think of when it comes to PR, but in actuality this is just one of various tactics that can be used to gain media coverage and communicate a compelling message. Additionally, PR is often mistaken for marketing, with the expectation that there will be a dotted line to a sale or new business. "Companies that are most successful with PR understand that at the core, PR is a public service, the purpose of which is to educate and connect with the community at large," says Nysha King, media relations specialist for MRINetwork. "Working in concert with marketing, the focus of PR should not be on self-promotion, but instead on the insight that the organization can provide, and how this information contributes to an ongoing dialogue, creating consistent, positive messages and stories about the company. These messages work over time to create a positive perception of the organization, ultimately making clients and prospects more receptive to engaging in business transactions, while also piquing the interest of 'A' players who could potentially work for the firm."

King offers the following tips for companies looking to attract talent with PR:

**Seek out opportunities to discuss industry trends, challenges and projections for market activity.** Contributing an article, submitting recent research findings and speaking at an industry conference are all ways that employers can offer up industry knowledge and different approaches to work that will raise their organization's profile. These efforts can start with a simple pitch note to the editor, or a proposal to the events committee. Top candidates want to work for companies that are innovative and

forward thinking; media coverage provides the opportunity to leverage thought leadership that can be enticing to prospective hires.

**Showcase your company culture.** Whether it's through social media or company ambassadors, one of the best ways to communicate what it's like to work at the organization is through employees. Capture fun events and unique aspects of the office environment that demonstrate why it's a great place to work. Then post pictures and describe what is being depicted on social media, the company website and other external communication vehicles. Additionally, identify high performers who can represent the organization and share their unique stories via career spotlights or contributed articles in publications.



**Partner with other organizations on initiatives that complement your business focus.** Engaging in philanthropy or other projects that align with the company's mission is a good way to demonstrate goodwill. Collaborating with associations and institutions that may benefit from the organization's expertise on a volunteer basis, provides a softer, human element that provides more depth to the company culture which can be especially appealing to candidates.

Today's talent are increasingly focused on working for employers who are ethical and display a commitment to meaningful causes.

**Manage your reputation on employer review sites.** At some point, you're bound to receive poor reviews from disgruntled former employees, on sites like Glassdoor.com. Get in front of these reviews by responding to any negative information and presenting the company in a more positive light. In your online posts, admit to any past challenges and discuss how the organization is working to improve these areas. Many times, just the simple acknowledgement of an issue diffuses the situation and demonstrates a company's integrity.

Whether a company is big or small, media coverage is something that every organization can successfully pursue to attract and recruit top talent. "Employers must first identify what they want to convey about their culture and then determine the available resources to disseminate this information through consistent messaging," adds King. "Once this is established, employers can create and roll out manageable PR strategies that communicate why the organization is a great place to work."