

Does Your Company Have the Cool Factor?

Every organization wants to be considered a "Best Place to Work" in order to attract and retain top talent, yet there is no cookie cutter formula for achieving this. Many factors go into making your company a great place to work such as company culture, employee benefits, and other perks. One thing that remains constant among the most desirable employers is the "cool" technology factor. As companies increasingly focus on providing more enjoyable work environments and improving employee engagement, technology is playing a key role in championing those efforts. This is becoming especially important for attracting top millennial talent, as technology and the flexibility, creativity, and efficiency it can bring is extremely valuable to them.



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Deciding when and how much to invest in the latest technology can be an arduous task for many organizations, and will depend greatly on the industry in which the company operates, as technologies can provide a different impact in manufacturing environments, for example, vs. an office setting. Typically the focus is on improving productivity and efficiency, and transitioning people away from doing things the way they always have for years. The process is often not fun and is met with resistance. However, when you consider the ability of technology to provide the "cool" factor of being a great place to work, it provides added incentive for employers to introduce new equipment and software.

So why is the technology push more important now than ever before? It really is a reflection of the highly digitized, mobile world in which we live, especially as more Millennials are entering the workforce and eventually maturing into greater leadership positions. "As the job outlook continues to improve, candidates are attracted to companies that incorporate the latest gadgets and technologies into daily work functions," says Reagan Johnson, director of technology operations for MRINetwork. "The best talent know their skills are in high demand, so an employer's ability to sell prospective hires on the flexibility, more efficient communications, and the fun these technologies will provide, is invaluable."

Johnson provides the following tips for companies looking to enhance their "cool" factor through technology:

Make it mobile. Today's professionals value the flexibility to do their job wherever and whenever, and mobile technology makes that possible like never before. Consider laptops or 2-in-1 laptop/tablets over desktops, so your talent don't feel shackled to their desks. These will provide the flexibility to take work into the conference room, the coffee shop, or home for those late night meeting preparations before an early day. Cloud technologies such as Office 365's OneDrive and Google's Drive make any document available on demand, for quick reference and use by backing it up online and making it available to smartphones and tablets. Voice communication tools are additionally available to make phone numbers mobile. A number, and the voicemail accompanying it, can be set up to ring through to more than just one employee's desk. This further allows employees to have the flexibility to take and make calls from anywhere.

Make it slick. Technology should look modern and cool. For example, while a small light laptop looks very impressive, it can also be made easier to use in the office environment by pairing it with a docking station and a multiple-monitor setup. This enables the laptop to operate as a desktop, in a more ergonomic manner for the office. Done right, a multi-monitor laptop set up can be impressive to see, leaving a good impression on potential talent, and also provide great efficiencies while working in the office.

Make it about communicating. Today's top talent are very connected, social and are used to getting instant feedback on their performance and in their communications. Consider implementing an instant communication platform such as Skype. This technology allows instant communication in a controlled environment that speeds up results. In fact, younger professionals use email less and less and will prefer more modern options to communicate.

Embrace social media for your company's communications both internally and externally. Top performers look for companies to be communicating via social media. Consider apps such as Yammer to build an internal social environment for your employees to share ideas and garner feedback. Millennials, in particular, value frequent feedback and evaluation and respond best to visual data. Business intelligence tools that provide visual graphic dashboards are a great way to communicate constant, instant feedback to your teams so they can strive to out-perform themselves.

Ultimately, what makes an organization cool or fun is a combination of many factors. "Technology is becoming a critical piece of the pie in terms of building an enjoyable, engaging company culture, while also sending a message to current and prospective clients that the company is a forward-thinking, modern business," adds Johnson. "Marketing efforts, as well as recruitment and talent management strategies, now require an emphasis on the "cool" technology factor to attract and retain top performers, and maintain brand equity with clients and investors."



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