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**ARTICLE**

## **EIGHT BRANDING KEYS FOR THE TALENT SEARCH**

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In this era of disruption, companies have been hard at work seeking **new ways to connect with their most valuable asset: Talent**. McDonald's in Russia is using AI to cover its 20,000 annual vacancies, while HubSpot is banking on employer branding, using the slogan "Creating the Company We Love" to signal its connection to its staff while showcasing its existing talent's day-to-day lives.

But potential talent's own interests must not be forgotten. What are candidates looking for? Where do they aspire to go? Aside from compensation, which works as an incentive for between six months to a year, today's candidates value other **intangible factors**. Talento

**"53% of candidates would think twice about participating in a selection process launched by a company they have read bad reviews about."**

Conectado 2019, compiled by EY and Infoempleo, claims that 53 percent of candidates would hesitate to apply for a position in a company they had read negative comments about. Most recently, Silicon Valley giant Facebook has had major trouble hiring new professionals in the wake of the Cambridge Analytica scandal.

In light of all this, we at LLYC have been thinking about **what influences a candidate to choose one company over another**. Regardless of the candidate's career or the state of the business

## THE 8 SECRETS OF EMPLOYER BRANDING

As Japanese philosopher Kaoru Ishikawa once said, "A company can only be as valuable as its talent." Ishikawa knew what he was talking about. Today, human capital is more important than ever before, presenting companies with the **major challenge of recruiting qualified, talented and committed employees**. The 2019 KPMG Compensation Trends and HR Report states that any company's main priority should be expanding its staff to support business growth. This is no easy task in a time when almost 60 percent of companies that are suffering from voluntary rotation face difficulties recruiting, a figure that rises to 95 percent for tech companies in particular. These problems are largely due to lack of qualified staff and the high demand for specific profiles. Neither this, nor the talent war HR professionals face each day, are alien to the business world.

sector, we believe brand perception (that is to say, a potential employee's view of the company) is vital to any candidate's decision-making process. This perception is comprised of eight attributes, which together impact a company's ability to attract talent. These are the eight secrets to employer branding. to their decision process. This perception is constructed from **eight attributes that influence companies' capacity for attracting talent. These are, we believe, the 8 keys to employer branding.**

**1. Prestige and Industry Leadership**

A primary factor of candidate attraction is a perception of the company as a market leader. Working for a prestigious, well-known company is excellent for a resume and leads to further career opportunities, though today's employees place less importance on this than other factors.

In Spain, 50 percent of candidates say they would refuse to work for a company with a bad reputation, even if it paid them more. Company reputation strongly affects young talent. Generation Z and Millennials weigh company reputation much more strongly than older generations did, including Generation X and Baby Boomers.

**2. Attractive image**

Thomas Aquinas once said that beauty is what is agreeable to the eye. Keep this in mind when considering how professionals will view a company. Randstad notes that "companies with strong brands receive up to twice as many qualified applicants as similar companies in the same sector," demonstrating that a company's projected image influences talent significantly. This corporate image is constructed across all points of contact between the company's brand and potential talent, including via websites, customer service interactions, physical stores, digital advertising and many other areas.

So, what factors cultivate an attractive, desirable image? We believe these include:

- **Uniform verbal and visual identifiers, which guarantee brand recognition.** This means keeping the brand's tone consistent

across all communication channels and consistently respecting visual identity guidelines.

- **Creative expression across all communities,** without giving up the brand's essence or the company's mission statement.
- **Consistency across all communications and activities,** with the brand acting on its commitments across multiple channels, including advertising, internal channels, endorsements, strategic partnerships and content.

**“Members of Generation Z or the Millenials give more weight to the company's reputation than older generations such as Generation X and the Boomers.”**

- **Positivity and visibility,** generating an impact on your target communities. In an environment saturated with commercial stimuli, grabbing talent's attention in a memorable way is vital for ensuring candidates consider your organization.

**3. Social Sensitivity**

In today's constantly changing society, professionals demand their potential and current employers **align with society's values, asking companies to be flexible with regard to environmentalism, inclusion, diversity, etc.**





Companies have to listen and be empathetic to respond to citizens' needs. Aside from CSR initiatives or social action, professionals feel more drawn to companies that reflect their purpose in everything they do (from the conception of their products and services to their HR policies) and are capable of responding quickly to and even anticipating major social challenges.

Randstad's 1st Company Values Report shows how professionals today seek values in their future employers like **responsibility, ethics, integrity and honesty**. This works both ways, as companies also want to recruit professionals who embody these values. The companies with the best understanding of the social context and prevailing values will no doubt prove more attractive when capturing talent.

**4. Strong and Present Leadership**

A company's societal perception and image as an employer are significantly influenced by its leader's public activity and messaging. Leaders allow companies to humanize their corporate values and lend credibility to their commitments. **An approachable leader projects the image of an approachable company; a transparent leader projects the image of a transparent company.** In his book *CEO Branding*, Marc Fetscherin makes a comparison to the world of cinema: "Just as an actor can guarantee a

movie's quality, the CEO is the sign that shows stakeholders what the company is like."

One of the most notable cases of workplace leadership can be found in Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, who, upon taking the position in 2014, decided to emphasize connecting with brand consumers, investigators and staff. This new position allowed him and his company to stand out. His famous motto, "The C in CEO stands for Culture," sums up how he has used his public image to support his company's reputation.

**“Beyond CSR or social action initiatives, professionals are more attracted to companies that decline their purpose in everything they do.”**



## “A close leader talks about a close company, a transparent leader talks about a transparent company.”

### 6. A Vision for the Future

When speaking about the future, companies like Google, Tesla, Amazon and Netflix all come to mind as giants of anticipation, but this concept is not limited to major corporations.

A Glassdoor study states that the best companies to work for in 2020 include Southwest Airlines, a low-cost U.S. airline; VIPKid, a platform for teaching English to children; and Intuitive Surgical Inc., a robotics developer which aids non-invasive surgery patients. What do these companies have in common? First, they take good care of their staff. But most notably, they also have policies and strategies in place that directly enable them to **anticipate market needs, generate sustainable competitive advantages and create immediate value for their customers.**

This capacity to get ahead of the game and innovate using new technologies means the world to potential talent.

### 7. Sector

The heterogeneity of different economic sectors means they can never hope to attract identical talent demographics. In particular, **a sector's general health directly influences talent's willingness to choose a company in that sector over one in another.**

### 5. Recommendations from Other Professionals

A report published in the *Wall Street Journal* last year showed that Elon Musk's aerospace company SpaceX had been falsifying its score on the well-known Glassdoor website. The company encouraged its most loyal employees to leave positive comments and created dedicated teams to improve the company's reputation on the site.

We discussed credibility in leadership, but the idea of credibility takes on even more importance in the realm of **firsthand testimony from staff**, who can describe exactly what working for the company is like. The perks of employee advocacy are many, but generating an image of your company as a good place to work is among the most important. Nobody is more capable of attracting new talent than current talent, because they are both more relatable and have greater access. Networks of professionals share similar experiences and communicate on equal footing, thus creating a deeper trust in messaging shared through these channels.



Certain sectors, due to mass impact and easily observable effects on people's lives, are much better known to the general populace, which is more aware of these companies' health and status than of those more technical, opaque sectors. Historically, companies in the hotel, leisure, technology, automobile and retail sectors have been most attractive to professionals due to their widely recognized role in and contribution to society.

That said, companies in more esoteric sectors or working in those with a damaged reputation should not lose hope. It is still very much possible to manage corporate branding to add value and stand out in these sectors, but doing so will take more work. It also requires an awareness of this added challenge, as this is vital for developing an appropriate employer branding program.

### 8. Employee Wellbeing

Talent should be valued from a financial perspective. However, factors other than compensation must be taken into account when considering the many factors on which candidates base their decision-making processes. Social benefit programs, training plans, flexibility and teleworking are just a few key factors for capturing talent. In fact, these form a category recently coined as "emotional salary." As one prominent example, the Andalusian software company DELSOL recently made the news as the first Spanish company to establish a 4-day workweek.

In combination, prestige, an attractive image, social sensitivity, a present leader, firsthand testimony, a future vision, sector health and employee wellbeing form the eight pillars every employer branding strategy should take into account. A company's image is directly impacted by all eight of these pillars, and, as such, an eightfold approach is essential. After all, when attracting potential talent, brand perception is paramount.



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