

I had the opportunity to attend the **2016 Glassdoor Summit** in #SFO this week with our talented Business Partner, Hazel Stevenson. For us, it was an opportunity to spend time with the industry leaders, and big boys and girls of Silicon Valley, and learn the finer points of Employer Branding and Recruiting.

Most importantly, it gave us a chance to dig into the “Hows” and “Whys” of employer branding. Understanding what works for the companies that have the time and resources to delve deep into this area of our world helps us learn what it is that dramatically shifts the needle for them. Our goal was be able to bring home a clear and concise employer branding guideline for our clients (you!).

Our working hypothesis of why we wanted to attend the Glassdoor Summit was:

Startups are competing with industry leaders for the same talent (particularly in the tech world), but don't have the same budgets to compete on the employer branding and recruiting stage.

So our primary questions going into the Glassdoor Summit were: 1) What can we learn from the work that the big boys are doing? and 2) How can we translate this into the scrappy cash strapped world of startup central—and how can we do it better than them?

## **1) WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE BIG GUYS?**

For Izzie, this question translates to “Where are the big guys strong in the world of employer branding, and where do they struggle?”

[Bob Hohman](#), CEO of [Glassdoor](#), opened the summit by posing the possibility of “transforming through transparency.” Essentially his concept is that as the marketplace becomes more transparent, it becomes more efficient. Yelp reviews, Trip Advisor, and the impact these companies have had on their industries are great examples of transparency at

work.

The same concept applies to recruitment and employer branding. The larger companies (and the ones doing it well), are at least trying to understand that they are no longer in the driving seat of the recruitment process. It's now a candidate (read: customer) centric environment. Now the candidate expects to know everything they need/want to know about a company, before they take even one step on the recruitment roadmap.

This reality has driven industry leaders such as [Salesforce](#), [HubSpot](#), [Glassdoor](#), [Google](#), and [Twitter](#) (the list goes on and on) to embrace total transparency. It turns out that recruiting and employee branding are just the flip side of the "brand and marketing" coin. Industry leaders now understand that every candidate is a potential customer and client. How the company is perceived in its recruitment process directly affects their customer brand.

**“When looking for answers on how to become the best place to work, most people look outside when they should be looking inside” ~[Katie Burk](#), VP Culture and Employee Experience at Hubspot**

Katie Burk, VP of Culture and Employee Experience at HubSpot, shared some simple ideas that have transformed Hubspot into an outstanding employer of choice:

Ask your employees what they actually think, give them a safe vehicle to deliver that feedback, AND LISTEN to the answers.

Write down what matters to you and your company and share it! Be bold. Brave. Unique. Be whatever you want to be, but tell people who you are and what you stand for as a company. (see the [Netflix culture deck](#) and [Hubspot culture deck](#)) Don't assume that your leaders or C'suite has the best ideas about culture.

Instead ask the people building it daily: your team members.  
Introduce the elephant in the room: talk regularly about what isn't working.  
Hire only remarkable people—don't compromise with the "shoulder shrug hire" and make sure everyone knows what remarkable looks like. (Your top performers do not want to work with average people.)  
Make Culture a BUSINESS priority, not an HR priority. Culture is never someone else's problem. The common theme heard throughout the conference was "you don't have a Glassdoor problem, you have a business problem."  
Humility is greater than hubris (and complacency = culture digression)

Most of this sounds like common sense, but there are many companies getting it wrong, or simply not taking the time to make transparency a priority.



## **2) HOW CAN WE TRANSLATE BIG COMPANY IDEAS INTO THE SCRAPPY FISCALLY-LIMITED WORLD OF STARTUPS—AND HOW CAN WE DO IT BETTER?**

The breakdown that was most apparent, is that large companies are slow to grasp the concept that the recruitment process and the brand process are one and the same. You are your employer brand. You can be agile, scrappy, and quick, and most importantly—unlike a big ship with a small keel, you can turn your boat around with a few good paddle strokes.

As [Ana Recio](#) from Salesforce put it, companies that are doing it well, are "Opening the Kimono" on their culture by allowing their employees to take over Instagram, not controlling or censoring their social media message, and giving a human voice to internal communications. Salesforce is working hard to own the recruitment conversation: from the first time the potential candidate looks at your company, all the way through their employee experience. Ana had five big tips for those of us in the audience. Here's how they translate

for you:

## **1. GLASSDOOR SUMMIT TAKEAWAY: DON'T GHOST ON YOUR CANDIDATES. EVER.**

You don't have the excuse of a massive ATS of applications. Manage the 1:1 communication with every applicant your company receives, even the ones that seem so far out in left field for your roles. You don't have a team of 15 overwhelmed recruiters that honestly don't overly worry about the 1 or 2 candidates that slip through the net because they never phoned them back. Closing the loop with EVERY candidate, not just the ones you interview and hire, is something you can do. So do it. Don't ghost on your people. Communicate and let people know where they stand, good, bad or ugly.

## **2. TRAIN YOUR HIRING MANAGER AND AVOID THE "GRILLING" INTERVIEW**

This was an interesting one: ask your hiring managers (or yourself) to let go of your ego. Hire people that are smarter than you, and don't try and make yourself feel smarter by making candidates feel small in interviews! Listen! Learn! You should not be doing all the talking. Let the candidate talk.

Train your people that are involved in the interview process. In a startup, many of you might not have hired or built teams before. That's OK! Just take the time to educate everyone in the process on how you want the company to be perceived, and what the end goal of the interview is! (Are you weeding people out, or wooing people in? It's all in the mindset!)

## **3. SHIFT THE HIRING MANAGER'S MINDSET: TODAY THE CANDIDATE HAS THE POWER**

This is huge. In today's market, it is imperative to understand the difference between an active candidate and a passive candidate. An active candidate is someone who has sought

out your company. Probably done a ton of research on you, what you do, your mission, (probably your personal LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and any other social mediums you have out there) It is OK to ask them, “Why are you interested in this company?”

The passive candidate is someone you are wooing. They have been purposely sought out for the opportunity—and they are expecting you to do the wooing. If you ask this candidate, “Why are you interested in this company?” they will probably respond, “I’m not, you called me,” which won’t leave a great impression. Know where your candidates come from and what they expect.

#### **4. EMBRACE THE GLASSDOOR ERA**

You can’t fight it, so don’t try. Be who you are, and be proud of it. Don’t try and cover up the bad—people will see right through it. Instead, own the conversation. Be humble, and honest. Not everyone is going to love you, and that’s OK. Can you speak to the comments? Are you working to improve things? Does your Glassdoor page rock? We can help you tell this story authentically and it starts with transparency.

#### **5. COURT THE CANDIDATE**

Every candidate. Passive and Active. Don’t waste their time. Respect each candidate as a human being, and give them clear and concise feedback. Let them know if there’s a holdup. Let them know if you changed your mind.

With so many great takeaways from this year’s Glassdoor Summit, we’ll have to do our best to make it out again next year. For more big ideas gleaned from another big event, check out [What We Learned and Loved At #TractionConf](#).

