

YOU HAVE A MINIMUM VIABLE PRODUCT, YOU ARE STARTING TO DEVELOP YOUR GO-TO-MARKET STRATEGY AND YOUR FIRST ROUND OF FUNDING JUST LANDED. YOUR TIGHTLY BOUND GROUP OF THREE OR FOUR DEDICATED ENTREPRENEURS NEEDS TO GROW. NOW YOU NEED TO MAKE THOSE FIRST, CRITICAL HIRES. HOW WILL YOU HIRE YOUR TRIBE? WHAT WILL THAT MEAN FOR THE COMPANY? WHAT WILL THAT MEAN FOR THE PEOPLE YOU HAVE BEEN WITH FROM DAY 1? AND HOW WILL YOU GO ABOUT IT?

These critical early hires are the people who will BE your company, the creators of your culture, the foundation of everything that is right (and wrong) as you scale up. Getting those early hires right is as critical as getting your product right. So how do you go about that?

About now is the time we could start tossing around HR Consultant Speak about “Employer Brand” and “Employee Value Proposition” and “Talent Attraction Strategy”. It might make us look like super smart consultants those big corporations really want to hire. But, it’s just not us. You have enough to understand running your business, you don’t need to start googling HRSpeak. How about we just talk about it in a way that we all can understand?

Seems obvious, right?

CREATE AN EMPLOYER BRAND

In the simplest terms possible, this means understanding who you are as a company and then telling everyone else who and what that is. If you know who you are, and you tell a compelling story, you will attract your tribe. Those are the people who value the same things you do, who work the same way you do and who will be 100% committed to whatever it is you are doing or creating. You won’t have to “create employee engagement”, because the right people will be believers from the first time they set foot in your workspace.



Image courtesy of Stocksnap

But dig a bit deeper and it's going to take some work. Some questions for you to start thinking about:

Why do you do what you do? (Hint - making big heaps of \$\$\$ is not the answer). [Simon Sinek has a great TedTalk](#) and you could read his seminal book "[Start With Why](#)".

What problem are you solving? At [BLANKSLATE](#) one of our founding beliefs is that startups and small companies should have access to the same knowledge, skills and resources that a full human resources team can bring to a large company. They can't afford to hire a team of highly skilled, experienced people professionals, but (in our humble opinion) they can't afford

not to have the expertise. The solution seemed obvious – outsource until the time is right to build an in-house team. So we offer ourselves as guns-for-hire HR pro’s who not only help you solve your immediate people issues, but hire or train your own team and hand off to them when the time is right. We love watching our “kids” soar on their own wings. ***That’s the problem we are solving, what’s yours?***

What is your unique company culture? What do you value? What is non-negotiable? What are your norms? Does everyone on the team see it, and see it the same way?

And does how you act and interact with each other, your customers and candidates reflect that in a real way?

Great companies intentionally create their cultures and, in doing so, also create a powerful Employer Brand. [Zappos](#) has built their business on a culture of customer-centricity, [HubSpot](#) has a powerful sales culture and [Buffer](#) is leading the charge in an experiment with radical transparency.

WE CAN LOOK TO THOUGHT LEADERS FOR INSPIRATION, BUT THEIR CULTURE IS NOT YOUR CULTURE. NO-ONE CAN DO THE WORK FOR YOU. YOU AND YOUR TEAM HAVE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS UNIQUELY VALUABLE AND IMPORTANT FOR YOUR OWN COMPANY, THEN TELL THE EVERYONE WHY THEY SHOULD BE PART OF IT

By creating an intentional culture, with explicit values and norms, and then living and leading those every day, you create the greatest marketing tool ever devised to hire the best, the brightest and most talented people for your team – your own employees. They will become your best advocates and the “secret sauce” behind your powerful recruiting success. Is there a better way to attract great people than to you have your own team telling everyone they know that they work for the best company, and have the best job, they could ever have imagined – come join us, we are amazing people doing amazing things. You can’t buy that.

Ok, so you got real clear on who and what you are and your team is out there espousing your awesomeness. But you still need to get the word out. Who owns that and how do you do it?

You Own It. Yes, CEO, Founder, Entrepreneur Extraordinaire, I do mean You. You are the

employer so you own the Employer Brand.



Image courtesy of Stocksnap

Think about your own most recent career move - would you have even considered a company you had not Googled to see what they were about? No? Then neither does anyone else who might want to work for you. What was important to you when you went to interview? The tasks list - unlikely. The people you would be working with, the space you would be working in and the product you would be working on - yup, I'm guessing those were really important. It's what your next great hire really wants to know. Who are you, how will I

fit in and will what I am doing be important. Can you answer those questions for them?

You own your Employer Brand, but you will likely need to pull in expertise to execute. What does that look like?

Have your people experts and your brand and community experts partner together to create a compelling story about who you are, what you stand for and what makes you unique. Make sure every single prospective applicant gets the message, loud and clear.

Your recruiting communication channels need the same thoughtful branding, love and attention that your customer facing channels receive.

From the first click on a job posting, or casual browse across your Careers page, an applicant should have a crystal clear picture of who you are, what you do and what you stand for.

They should be able to imagine what a day in the life of your company looks like and see themselves as part of that story.

Use videos, images and share stories about who your team is and what's important to them on your careers page and social media feed.

Here's some great examples:

[Inside HubSpot](#)

[Harley Davidson](#) (their culture might not be yours, but they are absolutely clear on who they are, what they value and who they want to hire)

Who wouldn't want to work for a company like [Westjet](#) and be part of their annual Christmas miracle?

And you don't need a \$1million and a pro film crew to make something meaningful, authentic (and hilarious) as the folks at [Innocent Glee](#) and [Carrot Creative](#) prove.

You cared enough to offer amazing health, wellness and lifestyle benefits and perks – so tell everyone what they are and why they are so great. And while you are at it, tell them why it's so important to you – be real, be authentic, be transparent.

Use your network. Every single person in your company should be empowered, and encouraged, to support your recruiting and talent strategies by sharing on their own social media, and that includes you CEO. They should love what they do enough to be reaching out

to their personal networks.

And so should you. Talk to your advisors, mentors and peers for recommendations and referrals. They know someone who knows someone. Work your network.

Do you have company LinkedIn, Angel and Glassdoor profiles? No? Easy wins.

If you would like to learn more about [2020 Outlook, The Future of Employer Branding](#), check out Universum's recent study. And if you love corporate speak [Harvard Business Review's article on Employer Branding](#) is actually a pretty engaging read.

We've told you a little bit about our *Why* at [BLANKSLATE](#).

[Drop us a message](#) if you think our *Why* can help you better understand yours!