

MARKETING

Social media a top priority for employment branding in 2017

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Digital channels are increasingly important as a recruitment tool. Image credit: Longchamp

By SARAH JONES

As it becomes more difficult for companies to find the right talent, organizations are increasing their investment in employer branding.

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According to a new report from Universum, a significantly greater number of medium to large companies have established or worked to develop an employer value proposition compared to last year. The larger an organization is, the more difficulty it has filling roles, leading to the biggest corporations making the greatest push to brand themselves as an employer.

"It gets harder every year to compete for top talent, and employers are seeing the investment in employer branding as crucial for their business success," said Jonna Sjvall, managing director, Americas at **Universum**, New York.

"Due to the amount of information, online companies are focusing more than ever on showcasing themselves in the right channels, with the right message and to the talent that matters to their business because getting their attention is becoming more challenging," she said.

"Achieving a successful result requires attractive but true messaging, cutting-edge marketing tactics and channel mastery as well as knowing what you stand for and how you differentiate yourself. The same rules apply as for consumer marketing who do we want to attract to our business and what do we want them to think about us?"

Produced with DHI Group, the **Employer Branding Now** report is based on a survey of about 2,500 respondents who work in human resources, recruiting or marketing. Group Universum's report compares the responses of organizations that are within its student-indicated list of the World's Most Attractive Employers, which include LVMH, L'Oreal Group and BMW among the top 50 business companies, while also looking at the efforts of companies of differing sizes.

Targeting talent

Universum's WMAE are considered the leaders in best practices. These companies are the most apt to have employer branding strategies in place, with 84 percent noting they have an EVP, compared to less than two thirds for

the average small, medium or large company.

Since employer branding is typically controlled by human resources, one of the key challenges companies note in establishing this type of positioning plan is budgetary. In addition to needing more funds than are allocated to HR, respondents also noted a lack of support from leadership as a hurdle to instituting an EVP.

EVPs that attract potential employees vary by region, with the U.S. pushing a challenge and diverse working environments, while U.K. employers most frequently focus on the friendliness of their culture. The traits used to appeal to applicants also differ depending on industry.



Some companies market to employees who are in certain functions. Image credit: Universum

One thing that separates WMAEs is a greater alignment between their EVPs and other aspects of the company's positioning, including its corporate vision and core values.

Consistency in presentation can also have an impact on the efficacy of employer branding efforts. About two-thirds of WMAEs have employer branding guidelines in place, more than their peers.

While employers want to be consistent, one aspect of branding that has become a greater priority from last year is targeting specific subsets of prospective employees. Now the top three item on company's to-do lists in employer branding, segmenting and reaching out to audiences such as recent graduates, workers in specific positions or applicants in different regions can help ensure a message's relevance.

Digital messaging

When looking to broadcast their employer brand messages, companies are favoring digital over traditional media. While recruiters and mailings are still seeing a growing investment from employers, social media is the main area where companies are increasing their attention.

WMAEs in particular grew their content creation for Instagram and YouTube by 15 percent, showing the importance of visual efforts. Social media efforts frequently aim for entertainment value as they position an employer.

Online retailer Farfetch recruited potential employees through a social video that compares working for the brand to a room full of puppies and a swimming pool filled with pink cotton candy.

Across sectors, culling talented and dedicated employees can be challenging, but Farfetch's recruitment approach aims to underscore how enjoyable working for its company can be. Consumers are increasingly aware of a brand's corporate social responsibility, ranging from its environmental impact to its treatment of employees of all levels ([see story](#)).

To attract talent to Mercedes-Benz's U.K. retail division, the automaker ran a commercial on television and on the big screen prior to showings of "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" ([see story](#)).

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Mercedes' parent company Daimler made Universum's list of most appealing engineering and IT employers.

Also, British automaker Jaguar Land Rover is acting on its ambassador program with the Gorillaz band to show off the performance of its vehicle while also looking for new talent.

Coders and engineers looking to join the Jaguar Land Rover team can apply through a mission-driven experience. The animated band Gorillaz is lending its application to the vehicle in an attempt to recruit the best coders through a new game ([see story](#)).

Along with digital media, more than half of WMAEs also plan to grow their spend on employee referral, turning their existing workers into advocates. WMAEs are also the most apt of any segment of respondents to use photos of their employees or their testimonials in their branding initiatives.

"These [leading] global companies are working relentlessly to be relevant to the different talent segments they are trying to attract," Universum's Ms. Sjvall said. "They are top advertisers and their HR and talent acquisition departments think as marketers: who are we after, what is interesting to them and how can we stand out to our advantage."

"These companies also have a global employer brand but localize their efforts to match different segments of talent," she said. "Digital talent, diverse talent and different geographies require different tactics and angles. They are all also mastering social media from the employer perspective."

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