

Employer branding strategies to win the post-pandemic competition for talent

 By [Celeste Sirin](#)

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As companies work tirelessly through this post-pandemic recovery period, it is most comforting to read the latest employment research surveys ([The Manpower Employment Outlook Survey](#) and [Robert Walters](#)) confirming the present and forecast increase in healthy hiring sentiments across various sectors. However, it would be foolish and insensitive to ignore the ongoing, soaring unemployment rates, persistent electricity cuts and choking economic growth which is exacerbating our recovery efforts, the poverty and social inequality.



Image source: Getty Images

SMEs remain resilient and the lifeblood of SA's economy, employing between [50-60%](#) of the country's workforce. It was not surprising that we saw the growth of African startups raising over \$4billion and the World Bank declaring startups as "the biggest job creating opportunity in South Africa".

The surge in startups and the reopening of the retail and hospitality sectors will see the war for talent [get tougher](#), albeit within a limited talent pool. There will be no reprieve, especially when it comes to companies seeking to recruit IT specialists, technical machine learning engineers, software developers, data analysts and data scientists.

Recruiters face a variable labour marketplace requiring different needs

We are now faced with a small, highly skilled market that might opt to shift from traditional employment to join the freelance, temporary, gig or contract population. Alternatively, they might choose to join a startup where they can follow their purpose, witness their impact and have a stronger sense of belonging in their sought-after career. Recruiters cannot ignore that they are now dealing with a variable workforce with different needs; and competing within a global talent marketplace.

What is the answer?

Currently, 72% of recruiting leaders around the world agree that employer branding has a significant impact on hiring and organisational success. Through differentiating themselves in the labour market, organisations can reap the rewards of recruiting, retaining, and engaging the right people for their business. This means talent leaders will need to work smarter and harder to creatively leverage employer branding and marketing universal HR practices to retain and grow their existing valued employees. Coupled with this, companies will need to build a competitive and distinct employer value proposition and communicate it persuasively if they wish to address passive high demand skills.



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Why the disconnect between recruiters and employer branding?

Recruiters and talent acquisition leaders view employer branding as a long tedious crusade filled with noise and nonsense. Recruiters want fast, short-term results and to draw on tools and solutions that will assist them in filling their high demand roles *now*.

Interweaving employer branding into the recruiting function should, however, be viewed as both long- and short-term. In this article, we will not focus on the necessary long-term implementation of a strategic employer branding framework, but on how recruiters and talent acquisition leads can build their employer brand presence and reputation “in real-time” to enjoy urgent results.

So what is the answer?

Recruiters need to stop being purely transactional; showing up, only to be seen and heard by the talent market when they have an urgent vacancy to fill. At the same time, companies need to provide them with the recruitment support they need and not undervalue them as mere order takers when they are recruiting the lifeblood that will make or break their organisation.

Solution:

- Recruiters and TA specialists should be producing and executing on exciting, informative content on social media platforms (such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) pre-hire. Investing time in creating content to build a following amongst the passive talent community will pave the way to enabling outbound recruiting efforts.

They need to be showing up consistently with valuable insights, interesting news and personality not only when they seek to recruit. Indeed's data shows 78% of people will investigate a company's reputation before applying, with 88% of millennials placing importance on joining the right company culture. Social platforms are an essential space for all

companies to share their employer brand and highlight their culture and employee initiatives so they can distinguish themselves in the job market.

- As brand and content marketers, recruiters need to be simultaneously engaging employees outside of the recruiting function to do the same. As influencers, their goal is to dominate the feed by showing up more than their competitors.

Result

Through the collective team efforts and ongoing activity of the recruitment team and the employee voice, they will drive top-of-mind awareness, becoming quickly recognisable as an employer brand and personal recruiter brand. In so doing, recruiters can effectively address the variable talent pool/community they wish to recruit.



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So when a stranger (passive candidate) receives a message from someone within your company, they would have built that level of insight, knowledge and trust and will more likely read it and communicate with the recruiter or TA specialist.

The goal

Nowadays, for recruiters to compete for candidate attention, they need to be promoting content, as this sells and enables better engagement and recruiting. Recruiters and TA specialists are marketers and salespeople all bundled into one person. Recruiters have to do this all themselves.

“ To successfully stand apart from the rest, they need to be creating innovative and interesting content outside of advertising jobs. This is short-term employer branding in a sense. ”

We don't see this in the world of sales and marketing as these two functions are valued and prioritised within organisations as they exist to make money.

With recruiters and TA specialists permanently in the trenches, speaking to both existing and potential employees, it makes sense to give them the tools, resources and solutions they need to represent the company as brand advocates. They are on the coalface, engaging with candidates not only sharing company information, but gathering valuable current market insights of competitors and hearing and seeing things that can affect essential talent hiring strategies.

Think about it... They hold the key to creating content that will shape and inform your employer brand and experience.

ABOUT CELESTE SIRIN

Celeste Sirin is an employer branding specialist, speaker, facilitator and founder of Employer Branding Africa which aims to develop employer branding best practice in South Africa by educating South African leaders. She is a leading authority in positioning and elevating employer brands for companies, offering extensive insight into local, African and international employer branding trends.

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