

PEOPLESCOUT EBOOK

# BUILDING AN EMPLOYER VALUE PROPOSITION AND EMPLOYER BRAND FOR THE FUTURE





# IT'S TIME TO CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK ABOUT EMPLOYER VALUE PROPOSITIONS AND EMPLOYER BRANDING

In talent acquisition, we're hearing a lot about the importance of a strong employer value proposition (EVP) and a well-managed employer brand platform. It's true – taking control of your employer brand will help your organization stand out in the current, tight-talent market. However, the approach many organizations have taken to building an EVP is dated. To be effective, an EVP and employer brand platform needs to be built for the rapidly changing world we live in today.

There are many definitions of employer brand, but at PeopleScout, we define employer brand, employer value proposition and employer brand platform as the following:

**Employer brand:** Your employer brand is the perception and lived experiences of what it's like to work for your organization.

**Employer value proposition:** Your employer value proposition, or EVP, captures the essence of your uniqueness as an employer and the give and get between you and your employees.

**Employer brand platform:** The creative communications you create and distribute based on your employer value proposition that guide the perception of your employer brand in the marketplace.

In this ebook, we dig into how to build an EVP and employer brand platform that stands out in the current candidate landscape. We'll describe how to make sure it is unique and authentic to where your organization is today. We'll also show you how to make it aspirational to share where you want your organization to go while keeping it dynamic enough to appeal to different candidates and keep up with the changing talent landscape. In this ebook, we will cover the process from beginning to end – from gathering the insights needed to define an EVP to integrating that EVP into every step of your candidate experience.



Traditionally, employer value propositions have been developed at one moment in time. They have not kept pace with the changing world, the multi-generational workforce and evolving workplace and candidate behavior. These EVPs are generally created with only input from executives, and without insights from employees throughout the organization. Then, that EVP is used for years before it is updated using the same process.

These traditionally formulated EVPs are often generalized with the aim of speaking to the widest audience. What really happens is that these statements feel meaningless to candidates because the EVP doesn't speak directly to the different types of candidates an employer wants to recruit – either based on skills or demographics.

This means that in the current economic conditions, employers with poorly defined and managed EVPs are left behind in the competition for talent. Candidates are drawn to organizations with EVPs that align with their own personal values.

These factors all combine to shift the goal for employers. Traditionally, employers have aimed for quantity – looking for large numbers of applicants with the theory that they could find top candidates. Now, to stay ahead, employers should focus on attracting the best candidates with a growth mindset whose passion and purpose align with the organization's mission. Employers should look for fewer applicants in total, but more people who fit the culture of the organization and who possess the skills needed to drive a company into the future. A well-defined EVP and well-managed employer brand can help accomplish this.

# WHAT MAKES A STRONG EVP?

There are four key factors to building a strong EVP: uniqueness, authenticity, aspiration and dynamism. You can see how they interact in the EVP of one of our clients, Linklaters, an international law firm. The role of a lawyer is changing with AI and automation; it's becoming more consultative and advisory as opposed to administrative. We developed the EVP, "Great Change is Here," for Linklaters to help them attract the candidates they need to take their organization into the future. Below, we share how this EVP is unique, authentic, aspirational and dynamic.

## Unique

Your EVP should stand out from the crowd and have a unique point of view. Many organizations promote statements like "Our people are our strength." Because a statement like this is generic, it doesn't tell a job candidate why they should work for your organization specifically, which makes it less effective.

The "Great Change is Here" EVP is unique because rather than emphasize the traditional aspects someone might attribute to a lawyer – attention to detail or strong analytical skills – it focuses on where the profession is going.

## Authentic

An authentic EVP should reflect the true culture and values of your organization. If your EVP doesn't reflect who you are, you can't speak to the people who would excel in your culture. An EVP that lacks authenticity could leave new hires feeling confused and betrayed if they find the culture is different than what they were led to believe.

"Great Change is Here" speaks to the way the culture truly operates within Linklaters – they are market leaders and future-focused. In the employer branding platform, we featured real employees and real stories to ensure the message was authentic to what the firm is and who the employees are.

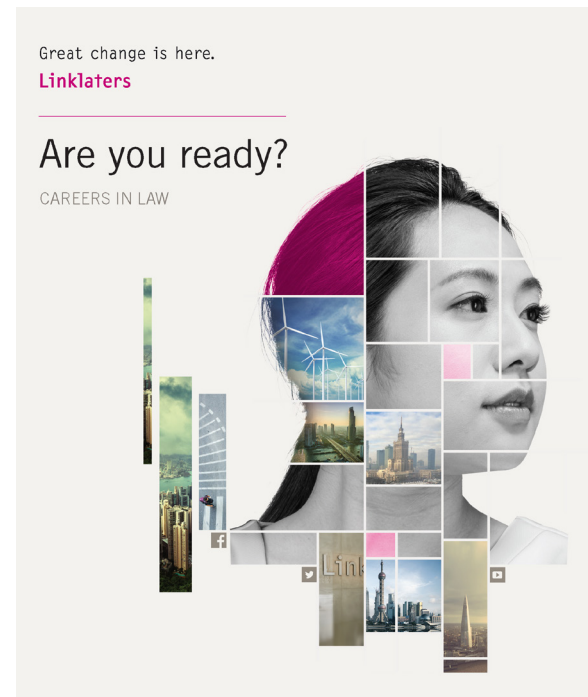
## Aspirational

Your EVP should also reflect where your organization wants to go. The aspirational aspects of your EVP will help you attract people who have the skills and passion to help you get there.

For Linklaters, the EVP calls out the fact that change is at the organization and in the industry and, no matter what the future holds, they are ready.

## Dynamic

Your EVP should be dynamic in two ways. The first is that it should be agile enough to respond to change, but also future-focused. The second is that parts of the message should be able to be dialed up or down to speak to different audiences. Over time, the current state and the aspirational state of your organization will change, and your EVP should shift with you.



Your EVP should also be able to speak to the diverse group of candidates you want to attract. Your current employees are not one homogenous group – they have different roles and responsibilities and come from different backgrounds. The candidates you are targeting are equally diverse. The core of your employer brand should start with a universal truth, but effective employers will also create messaging that speaks directly to different audiences and geographies.



# GATHERING INSIGHTS TO PRODUCE RESULTS

An effective EVP should be developed through a process of embedded discovery. This is what we do at PeopleScout. We spend time in each organization, developing a deep understanding of the culture, the goals and what makes the organization unique. We ask hard questions and gather insights that leaders may miss when they are too close to be objective. Our approach also allows employees to speak more candidly.

This process includes qualitative research – like conversations with leaders of the organization and former and current employees – and quantitative research, including data from candidates as well as engagement and pulse surveys. During this initial insights phase, we collect data and information from new hires, current employees and alumni of your organization so you can understand what motivates people to stay and what drives people to leave. You may have some of this information from exit interviews, but you can learn more by adding stay interviews and new-hire surveys.

## **After completing the discovery process, we define three elements:**

- **Your organization's aspirations:** This includes short- and long-term goals about how the organization wants to change in response to industry and cultural transformation.
- **Your organization's current state:** This should reflect the reality – the good and bad about what it is like to work at your organization right now.
- **The outside perception of your organization:** This should include the level of brand recognition you have as an employer, as well as what potential candidates think of your organization.

There will be areas of overlap between these three elements, and by analyzing where they intersect, we can begin to build your EVP. We put together a statement that reflects those three elements and what is unique, authentic and aspirational about your organization. We also build the EVP so it can bend to speak to different audiences and change over time. Once that statement starts to take form, we test, refine and optimize.

# TESTING, REFINING AND OPTIMIZING

The process of building an effective EVP is more akin to the process of testing and refining prototypes than it is to a grand reveal. In many ways, gathering insights and testing will happen at the same time. Throughout the process, start with a hypothesis, and then test and refine the message. Your hypothesis will be challenged through conversations with leaders and employees so that it can be refined for an initial roll-out.

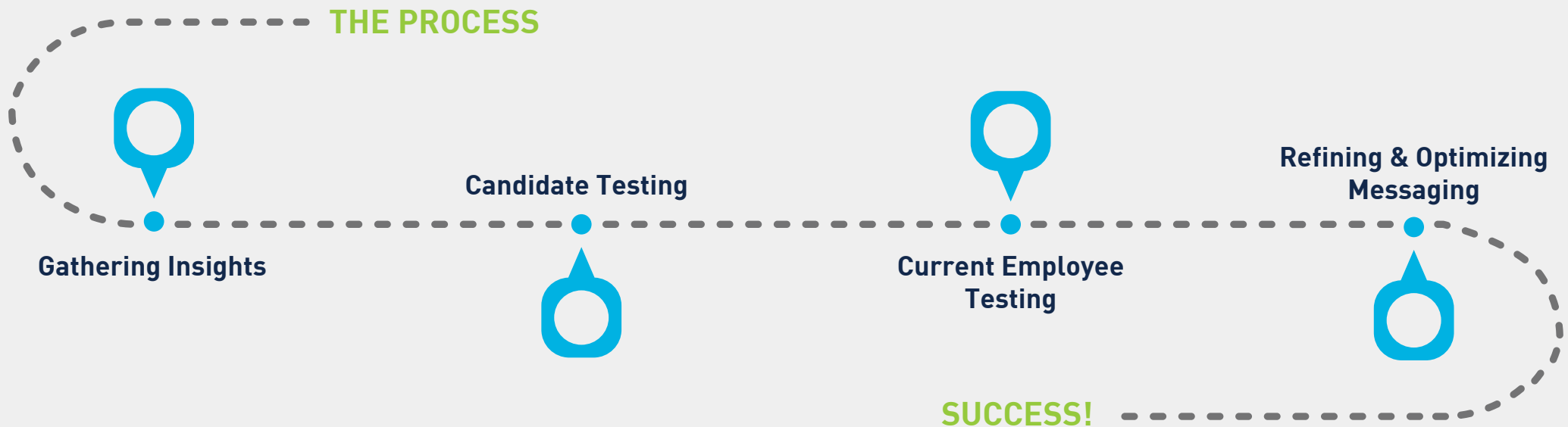
Throughout this process, you will make changes to your initial EVP framework as you see what aspects of it resonate with your audience and current employees. During the testing phase, you should also identify your audiences. Your organization will have several, depending on the type of work you do. The type of candidate you want for a digital or creative position will likely be drawn in differently than a candidate for a floor manager or call center position. Test your EVP with these different audiences and build a spectrum of employer brand messaging, rather than one that simply splits the difference. Once your EVP is ready, you move into the roll-out stage – gaining buy-in from your current employees and infusing it throughout your entire candidate experience.

You can see how we adapted the EVP for Sainsbury's, a UK grocery store, in the following infographic.

Once you roll out an EVP, you aren't done testing, refining and optimizing. One way to think of this process is that your EVP should always be "in beta." This doesn't mean you need to undergo the process of discovery from the beginning each time you modify your EVP. Instead, as your organization evolves, continuously test and evolve your brand messaging so that it always reflects where your organization is and where your organization is going.



# CASE STUDY: DEVELOPING AN EVP TO ATTRACT MANAGERS TO SAINSBURY'S



## The Problem:

The UK grocery chain needs to attract candidates for the role of customer and trading manager. However, this is a new position in the market, so most people aren't familiar with what it means. On top of that, many people had a negative view of retail management.

## The Challenge:

We needed to build an employer branding campaign that would overturn public perception of retail management, introduce a new type of role and hire more than 3,000 people out of more than 25,000 applicants.

## The Solution:

We determined that the most motivating benefit of the role was the potential to become a leader and bring out the best of a team. With that, we created the "Leading Starts Here" campaign that reconnects people with the emotional core of what's great about management.

It features videos and images of a diverse group of people sharing stories about managers who inspired them.

This platform was developed by gathering insights, testing how candidates and current employees responded to the messaging, and refining and optimizing the messaging to speak to the candidates Sainsbury's wanted to target.

## End Results:

The campaign engaged more than 377,000 people and the video was viewed more than 484,000 times with extremely positive feedback. With the campaign, Sainsbury's met its goal of hiring more than 3,000 people. Sainsbury's Zone Managing Director, Daren Sinclair, said of the campaign, "We now employ 3,200 fantastic people on the back of a great campaign we're all very proud of."



## LAUNCHING AND MAINTAINING YOUR EMPLOYER BRAND IS AS IMPORTANT AS BUILDING IT

After building a strong EVP and employer brand, employers face the challenge of effectively promoting and marketing that brand to candidates and employees. The roll-out and management of an employer brand platform is just as important as the care taken to research and craft that positioning.

For many organizations, it's easy to show enthusiasm while developing a new EVP, but that same enthusiasm needs to continue through the internal and external launches.

**A Cornell University report\* identifies several tangible benefits of a strong employment brand:**

- Organizations with an employer brand platform experience an average turnover rate of 10%; the overall turnover average is as high as 16%.

- When organizations live up to their marketed EVP, new employees arrive with a higher level of commitment at 38%, compared to organizations that don't live up to their marketed EVP, which are at just 9%.
- As an employer brand progresses, employees buy in to the new corporate culture, which increases their motivation.
- A strong employer brand can increase employee engagement, even through periods where employee headcount is reduced and salary raises are controlled.
- In organizations with a developed employer brand, employees are more engaged in the decision-making and management process.

\*"Is there a correlation for companies with a strong employment brand between employee engagement levels and bottom line results?"

# STARTING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

The internal launch of an EVP and employer branding platform lays the groundwork for the success of the external launch. To make the internal launch successful, you need to bring the EVP to life so employees understand and embrace it. When employees are engaged with your employer brand, they will become brand ambassadors.

The careful process of gathering insights within your organization, which occurs during the discovery phase, is key to a successful internal launch because employees need to recognize their own reality in a new EVP. If an EVP and employer brand platform doesn't resonate with current employees, you will struggle to develop advocates and champions of the brand.

An effective internal rollout needs to accomplish these four steps to create advocates and amplify the brand:

## **1. The leadership team and hiring managers should know and understand the elevator pitch of your organization.**

The people who are on the frontlines interacting with candidates represent your brand and should be able to articulate your EVP consistently. If you don't have an effective internal rollout, your external message will not be consistent. These brand ambassadors should be trained on the talking points and should practice sharing the pitch with candidates.

## **2. Recruiters know where they can find materials to share your message and how they can reach out to their networks.**

Your current employees can also function as brand ambassadors and can create valuable marketing opportunities. They should clearly understand and identify with your new EVP, and they should have the tools they need to share that messaging with their networks. A successful internal launch should ensure they have access to a library or media toolkit of employer branding material, and they should be encouraged to use it. This should include videos, images and even messaging for social media

that employees can copy and paste to enable employees – ranging from recruiters to outgoing workers with large networks – to share online.

## **3. Your employees should feel empowered to share your message and refer strong candidates.**

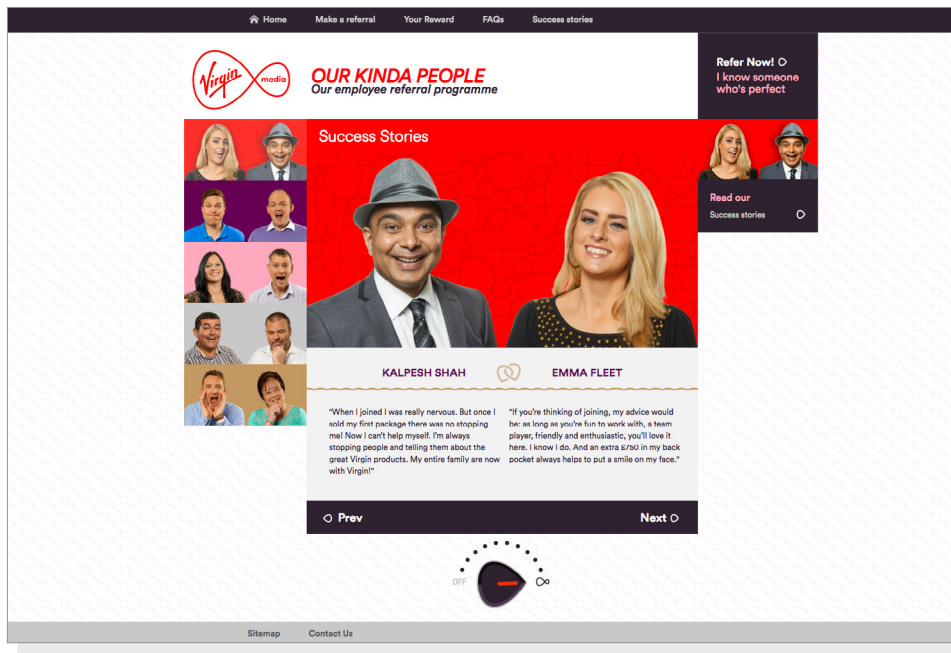
During your internal launch, encourage employees to share your brand culture and their experiences with their networks. In large organizations, this can be a challenge, but it is a culture you can build through team conversations and highlighting examples of your EVP in action. With this, you can encourage employees to share their own experiences.

## **4. Identify talent scouts, a type of employee brand ambassador who can identify people in their networks and encourage them to join your organization.**

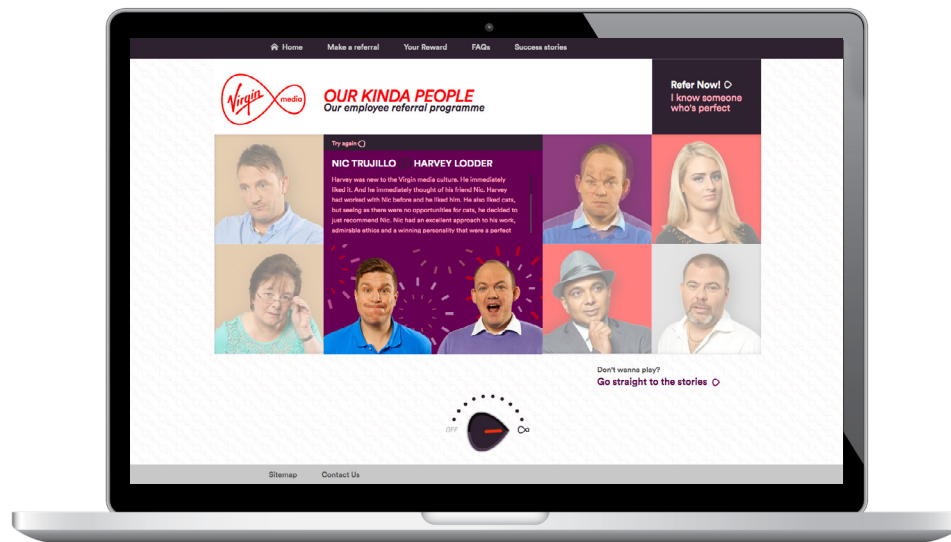
Some of your current employees will have strong networks and will excel at finding people in those networks with “the right stuff” to succeed at your organization. Some employees will also have the opportunity to share your employer brand at speaking engagements, conferences and other industry events – even if those events aren't directly related to employer branding.

Launching a new employer brand platform is an opportunity for a renewed focus on employee referrals. Current employees who can understand and articulate your EVP can point you to people in their networks who may also be a good fit.

To drive increased referrals for our client, Virgin Media, we revamped its referrals site to make the employer brand the heart of the site. Additionally, we helped the organization communicate the EVP to current employees so they could identify the organization's “kind of people.” Less than one year later, referrals increased from 10% to 25% of external hiring; staff participation increase by 40%; the organization saved an average of \$9,000 per hire; and the quality of hires increased.



*Employee Referral Program  
Virgin Media*



*Employee Referral Program  
Virgin Media*

# BRINGING YOUR EVP TO LIFE THROUGH THE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

After a successful internal launch, in which your employees understand your EVP and brand ambassadors have the tools they need to share your message, you will be ready to launch your employer brand platform externally through your candidate experience. This launch should be a multifaceted approach driven by the audience insights you gleaned during the earlier stages of EVP development. Before you launch externally, you should understand the types of candidates you want to attract, what type of media they consume, where they are and how you can speak to them. As you build out your employer branding platform, vary your media and messaging to speak directly to those audiences.

Virgin Media has a large workforce and needs employees who can support its organization today and adapt for the future. The company struggled to fill senior corporate roles, field sales advisors and part-time retail positions. We helped build an EVP that emphasized the open-minded, less corporate, fast and flexible culture of Virgin Media.

## Brand Ambassadors

Your candidate experience starts with the first time a candidate experiences your brand. In many cases, this could be by interacting with a brand ambassador, like an employee who shares job openings and encourages people in their network to apply.

According to Marketing Week, nearly 70% of consumers don't trust advertising and 42% don't trust brands. Additionally, nearly six in 10 consumers don't trust brand communication unless they see "real-world proof" of the message.

In an employer branding campaign, your employees functioning as brand ambassadors can provide that real-world proof. Changing algorithms on social media sites also make the voice of the employee louder than the voice of the brand. Facebook changed its algorithm in early 2018 to favor content from friends and family as part of the company's response to the platform being used to spread disinformation, according to Wired. This means that

messaging from employees will reach more people than messaging from your brand, and you should match your strategy to this reality.

Recruitment Toolkits

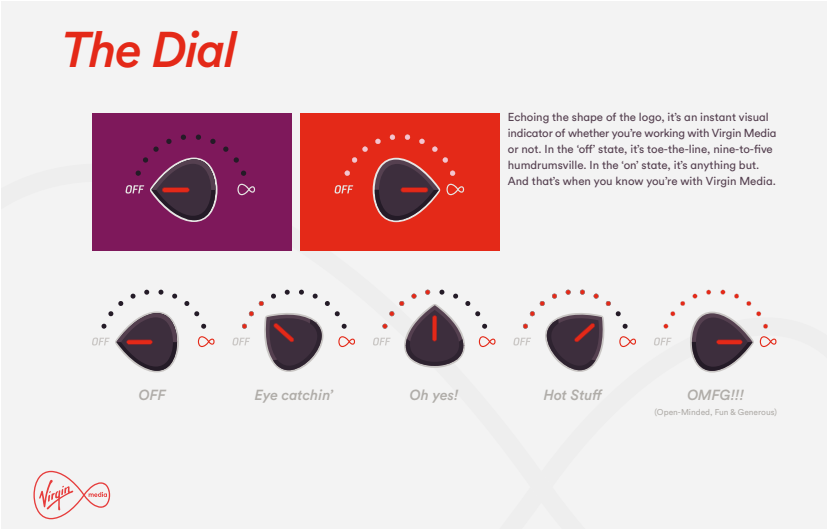
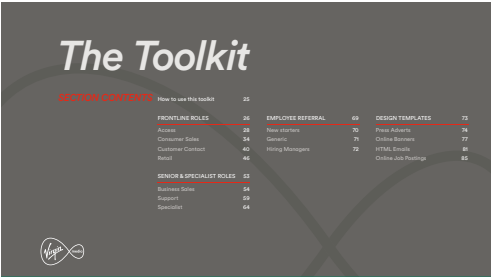
To make sure your brand ambassadors can share your message effectively, build a media toolkit that recruiters can use to find images, videos or even text they can copy and paste to share your message. This also ensures you have some control over what employees post and share so that it ties to a consistent message. This toolkit should include things like video, shareable social media images, guidelines, ideas, templates and even pieces of prewritten copy and design elements that employees can piece together. These pieces of media should be stored where employees can easily access them, but the storage method will depend on what technology your organization already has in place, such as an intranet or a platform like SharePoint.

The assets should be varied, using different messages to target the variety of audiences you've identified during the research and development stage. Using this library, recruiters and hiring managers can easily share high-quality, specific images, video or text with their networks, which improves efficiency and extends the reach of your brand.

For Virgin Media, we created a toolkit with more than 100 different pieces of media to make it fast and easy for recruiters to disseminate brand communications. To help tackle their challenge of attracting candidates for senior corporate roles, we produced online video content in an informal and unpolished style. It showcased a day in the life of an employee at different office locations, and we made it available through the toolkit. After these videos were shared on social media by recruiters and other employees and on specialist job boards the number of the number of days-to-offer decreased by 44% for management accountant roles and by 26% for analyst roles.

Personalized Career Sites

A career site with personalized content will help reach the different types of candidates you want to attract to your organization. It is no longer enough to brand your career site with a one-size-fits-all approach. Certain candidates may be drawn in by the social purpose of your organization. Others may be looking for career advice. Your site should speak to all of them.



For Virgin Media, we created a clean, compelling recruitment brand destination that is easy to use. The careers site laid out the EVP through web copy, and the site also included personalized information for candidates for the wide variety of roles.

To support the hiring of part-time retail employees, the career site heavily featured these roles – listing them as hot jobs on the home page. This strategy, combined with new imagery from the employer branding platform and promotion on social media and relevant job boards, increased applications for these roles by 107%.

### Onboarding

Your employer branding platform cannot simply end with the offer letter. Between being offered a job and joining the organization, you want these future employees to feel like they are part of something. An onboarding process that reflects your EVP will validate a new hire's choice and underscore the EVP communicated during the hiring process. Your onboarding process should bring the culture of your organization to life in a way that's tailored to each role.

We updated the internal onboarding site for Virgin Media with information about locations, benefits, the company's vision and values, frequently asked questions and information about the people they need to know and who they can go to for help. The new site saw double the average number of pages viewed per visit and people spent 2.5 times longer on the website.



*Onboarding Website  
Virgin Media*





## KEEPING IT DYNAMIC

After undertaking an internal and external launch, it can be daunting to keep an EVP dynamic so it changes as your organization evolves. However, if you create, launch and measure the success of your EVP with that in mind, the process will be much easier.

The majority of the data collected during the initial research stage is likely data you continuously monitor on your career site through job applications, from new hires and through employee pulse surveys. With these sources of data, you can optimize hiring metrics through AB testing and tracking and refine your message as your organization evolves in the future. By testing this way, you can see what works. For example, you could experiment with different images or a message that emphasizes a certain aspect of your EVP and see if the right candidates respond.

If you created an EVP that is truly unique and authentic yet aspirational, the DNA at the core of your employer brand will remain true as you move forward. However, as you monitor success, data will show which messages are effective with each audience. Armed with that information, your employer brand should grow and flex as you face new challenges.



## FINDING AN EVP PARTNER

If your organization is looking to develop and launch a new EVP and employer brand platform, an outside partner is valuable because you are often too close to see your organization from a candidate's perspective. You may also lack the internal expertise and bandwidth. Here are three things to consider when looking for an EVP and employer brand partner:

1. Look for a partner that goes beyond an academic exercise of presenting data about “what people want” and instead takes a more bespoke approach to develop an EVP and platform that is fully tailored to you. Ask what that partner will do to get under the skin of your organization to define what is authentic for you.
2. Your talent advisory partner should be future-focused and understand the cultural, economic and geographic differences of the employees who work at your organization and the candidates you want to attract. Ask how they will be able to shift your communications and messaging to speak to different audiences.
3. Ask a potential partner how they translate the quantitative and qualitative data they collect into stories that will resonate with your audiences and stand out from the crowd.

**Contact us to learn more about EVP and employer brand development and other talent advisory services.**

**Listen to the companion podcasts, Building an Employer Value Proposition and Employer Brand for the Future.**

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