

Employer Brand in a local tech market

Amsterdam and the Netherlands
Software Engineer Attraction
Rob O'Brien



The Scenario

Building Tech Brand – Amsterdam

Scenario 1: Let's pretend a sportswear/tech business is planning to open an Engineering office in Amsterdam in 2023 to hire at least 50 software engineers and build out a Tech and Product hub. What strategy would you create to help us achieve this aim?

Managing Your Resources And Budget

Scenario 2: In 2023 you have 2 EB/RM specialists on your team with a limited annual budget of \$40,000 and have to build strategy to support the following priorities. Considering limited resources and budget, how would you align your resources to set yourself up for success? What advertising channels would you use? What performance indicators do you monitor to ensure success? How do you coach and support your team?



Building Tech Brand: Amsterdam

Competitors



Competitor Analysis

Focusing around the hiring needs and the brief objective, the local market competitors span across various sectors rather than the obvious market leaders. The competitor analysis becomes a two pronged approach: Long term objective of employer brand awareness and immediate objective of hiring.

Local Competitors that will support the immediate hiring need: 50 x Software Engineers. These are employers that currently have high volumes of the candidates needed for this role and therefore would be directly targeted with recruitment marketing inline with the employer brand.



We then have the Employer Brand global competitors with local presence, where we need to focus on elevating our proposition to become an employer of choice and to be a viable alternative to their talent pool.



Other interesting local key competitors of interest include:



Key Competitors

For the purpose of this exercise I have taken a look at competitors with a strong local presence and talent supply of potential candidates for this exercise. Looking at 4 key differentiators:

- Employer Brand Message
- Benefits
- Culture and Values
- Content and Personality

Booking.com



Key local Competitors



The Employer Brand Message

At ASICS, we empower our employees to Stop At Never - to pursue their career goals. We strongly believe in promoting from within, and always look first to our internal talent for open opportunities. Here at ASICS, we also promote the opportunity to grow and develop your career by transferring to various departments for well-rounded experience.

Benefits

Health Benefits
Flex Spending Accounts
Life Insurance, AD&D, ATD, and LTD
Vacation/Holidays
401K
On-site Fitness Centre
Employee Assistance Program
Discounts
Access to Industry Pro-Deals through Promotive.com
Momentum Meetings
Employee Recognition
ASICS Spirit Champion Team
Wellness

Culture and Values

Based upon our core values, everyone's input and contributions are respected. We nurture a collaborative environment, and hire team members that are never content; always pushing through their own limitations, continually in the pursuit of improving performance, are innovative, creative, reach for new challenges and always drive to surpass the next goal.

Diversity is valued in ASICS. We expect every director and employee to respect the people and the cultures with which we work, to act responsible and to treat co-workers with dignity. ASICS prohibits any conduct that singles out a director, an employee or a group of employees in a negative way.

Content and Personality

The message is built around their product and aligns well with that – they are striving for brand ambassadors through their employees. However, they do lack employer brand content and if you dig deeper there are some very negative reviews



Key local Competitors

Booking.com

The Employer Brand Message

A World Of Possibilities

At Booking.com, we make it easier for everyone to experience the world. We are determined to make the future of travel more sustainable, more accessible, and more inclusive so that everyone can enjoy this extraordinary world as their extraordinary selves for many more years to come. Join us.

Culture and Values

We believe in the power of curiosity, ex
We care more about reaching our success
We are humble, open and friendly
We embrace the opportunity to improve an
We thrive on change.

Values:

Do the right thing
Learn forever
Own It
Succeed Together
Think Customer First

Diversity scores really highly at Booking.com with over half of their workforce being female

Benefits

- Headquarters located in one of the most vibrant cities in Europe: Amsterdam.
- Performance-based company that offers 29 vacation days, career advancement and lucrative compensation.
- Training, regular hackathons and opportunities to travel.
- Discount on Booking.com accommodations with the “Booking Deal” including other perks and benefits.
- Company sponsored family and social activities to help our employees become integrated with each other and Dutch culture.
- Diverse, unique colleagues from every corner of the world.

Content and Personality

The message again is built around their product and aligns well with that – they challenge themselves to offer a world of possibilities to candidates – downsides are that the messaging seems to appeal to youth and not very age diverse.



The Nike logo, featuring the word "NIKE" in a bold, italicized, sans-serif font, with a large, stylized swoosh underneath it.

Culture and Values

Diversity – Never the same. Always Nike.

Content and Personality



**WORLD-CLASS
CAMPUS. WORLD-
RENOWNED WORK.**



Key local Competitors



The Employer Brand Message

Don't Follow the Herd: Be You, With US.
#WeAreCisco

Cisco doesn't want you to blend in, we want you to stand out. Not in spite of what makes you unique, but BECAUSE of it! Ready to live your career in colour and be a part of our digital transformation?

What do we value most? Our people, our technology, and changing the world — this is the #WeAreCisco story, and we're just getting started

Culture and Values

Give your best
Give something of yourself
Give your ego the day off
Take accountability
Take difference to heart
Take a bold step

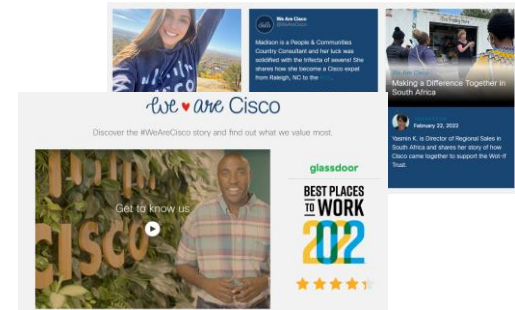
Diversity – Leading a More Inclusive Future for All.

Benefits

- Competitive compensation
- Employee stock program
- L&D budget
- Bonuses
- Discounts
- Flexible working
- Generous paid time off/holidays
- Health and fitness centres
- Parental support
- Volunteer time off
- Personal development programs

Content and Personality

Not very localised and seems to centre around the US culture but they do have very clear brand and strong initiatives in place. Good social content.



Key local Competitors notes

There is strong competition in the local market in both Amsterdam and the wider Netherlands region. Firstly from established brands with large budgets and deep pockets so they key to success when elevating the employer brand in this market will be identifying the EVP gaps in their offerings and pitching something unique that they don't have.

All are well aligned to their brand so it will be wise to follow this approach – candidates are customers – customers are candidates

Success will come down to content and targeting – ensuring what budget we do have is used wisely in channels where the audience spend most of their time – not just making presumptions just because they have a profile on there. Just because targeting says 110,000 candidates – don't presume you will reach them. It's better to go for smaller targeted numbers of cohorts that actually spend a lot of time online in a certain place – you can be more guaranteed that your messaging will hit them.

Finally, it will be important to not to try and compete in certain areas where its just not possible, the Nike offering is pretty amazing over there. Look at the gaps in their EVP and try and fill those rather than offer comprehensive training when they have a world class academy – this will hit your retention levels hard in the long run.

Employer Brand in the Netherlands



Employer Branding

Netherlands

**Trust and Self
Management**

**Strong
Corporate
Culture**

**Challenging
Work**

**Top levers and drivers
for employees in the
Netherlands**

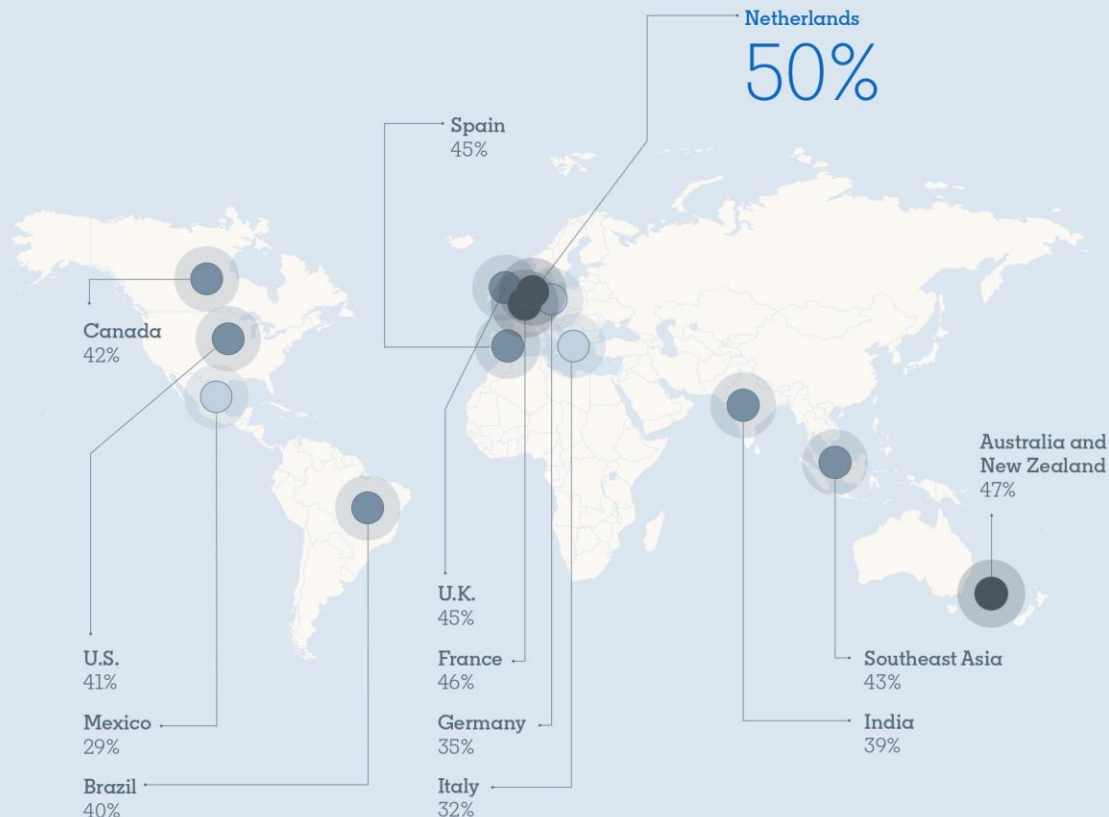
**Clear
Company
Mission**

**Inclusive
Workplace**

**Work Life
Balance**

Company Culture is key in the Netherlands

Percentage of candidates who consider company culture a top priority when picking a job



Global Average = 40% (LinkedIn Global Talent Trends 2022 Report)

The Netherlands leads the global average in this area – meaning that content around culture would play a key part in the Employer Brand strategy

The Impact of Value and Inclusion

Software Engineers have a tendency to work on their own for a lot of their day, couple this with remote working and you have a problem of motivating and making people feel included.

Value + Inclusion = IMPACT

If you don't make the employee feel their true value at every level, then you risk losing them. If you don't communicate it during the talent journey then you also risk alienating them. Value and Inclusion are a key part of the EVP offering.

Often companies think that their overarching mission, whether it be environmental, societal or sustainable is enough to attract, and while its hugely important, candidates also want to understand 'WIIFM' and especially tech talent wants to understand how their work creates value and impact.



Employer Branding

Engaging with
Software Engineers

The Power Of Purpose plays an integral role when communicating to tech talent in the Netherlands. They are motivated by the challenge and the technology they will be working on. They also need to clearly understand how the tech impacts the wider world they live in.

Having a goal is important. The number of job seekers in the Netherlands paying attention to this when choosing their next employer has increased by **35%**. People also value inclusion and diversity in the workplace more, this in turn make a happier and more innovative workplace.

Its important to use these factors to elevate your employer brand because the talent market is more candidate driven than ever. Data shows that demand for Software Engineers has increased by almost **400%** YOY in the Netherlands.

So what motivates and inspires Software Engineers?

Introducing the Software Engineer



Understanding the audience

Meet Simone



I'm a software engineer in my organization in Amsterdam with a keen interest in quality and the skills necessary to promote it. My objective is to help build quality into the development process and promote ownership of quality across every team. To accomplish this, I develop tooling to support test processes and quality reporting. I also write tests at every level in the test pyramid. I groom my organization's tests to make them both efficient and effective as well as help grow a quality mindset across departments

My priorities at work:

- **Develop and maintain test frameworks:** I need to provide the engineers in my organization with one or more well-maintained test frameworks that facilitate writing tests at the appropriate level.
- **Provide tooling and reporting to facilitate quality:** I need to create and maintain both tooling and reporting that allows developers to more easily accomplish quality-related tasks and provide feedback to engineering and management.
- **Perform quality planning with counterparts:** I want to interact with my engineering counterparts on a regular basis, tracking what is coming up for development as well as what is happening now and what is being delivered. Knowing this, I need to be able to identify both the riskiest and most important work being done so I can provide quality feedback at the appropriate time through performing code reviews and having discussions about both the design and implementation of the features.
- **Manage Test Environments** I also provision and maintain test environments that are representative of the software being used in production. Through these environments testing can then occur that is as realistic as possible and catch issues earlier.

Team Collaboration

- Development teams
- Product teams
- Infrastructure
- UX teams
- Support

Skills and Personal Traits:

- **Focused:** Has a great focus on quality and what it means in an engineering role
- **Adaptable:** Can think like a developer and an architect
- **Curious:** Enjoys learning how things work or taking things apart
- **Technical:** Enjoy building tools (has coding skills)
- **Passionate:** Loves improving tools and processes and advocating for quality
- **Effective communicator:** articulate both verbally and in writing

Frustrations

- Flaky tests
- Long running test suites
- Not being able to reproduce issues due to lack of representative test data
- Unstable infrastructure
- Not being able to give earlier feedback on development work

Key Tools I use:

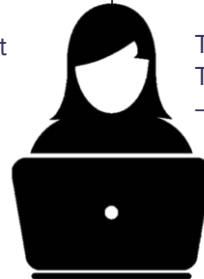
- Tracking, documentation: GitLab Issues
- Communication: Slack, Zoom, GitLab Issues
- Real-time documentation: Google Docs
- Terminal, coding environment: VIM, VS Code, or RubyMine with Ruby, JavaScript, Terraform
- A cloud management console: To access the infrastructure (Google Cloud Platform, Amazon Web Services, Azure)
- Environment Provisioning: Terraform and Ansible
- Triage and mitigation:
- Docker - to reproduce issues and emulate environments
- Accounts for different environments - for testing and infrastructure
- Data repositories and generators
- Logging tools
- Sentry | Prometheus | Elastic Stack

Attracting the audience

Hiring Simone

Where does she 'hang out' online

- **Github** – Great place to talk and communicate with engineers – she has no choice but to be on the channel as its where she does her coding so spends a lot of the day here
- **Stack Overflow** – More than 97% of software engineers visit stack overflow at least once a week and at least a quarter visit multiple times a day. The influence on this platform is hard to overstate
- **Cryptoblogs** – Engineers spend a lot of their time on cryptoblogs so are a great place to focus on particular for programmatic – The Pragmatic Engineering Blog
- **Medium** – They use this channel for the consumption of their news and information
- **LinkedIn** – Tends to be a place where Product Managers might look for information
- **Reddit** – Has huge communities of engineers asking questions and meeting new people



Types of content she engages with:

Short form/burst – Its about 'filling the spaces between places' – her time is scarce, she rarely responds to email.

- Video – No longer than 20 sec
- Infographic – easy to digest simple information
- Audio – Soundbytes and Jingles that they can quickly digest while working
- Micro Information – easy to digest, small pockets of communications
- Problem Solving – Cracking code content

They want to see authentic happenings, imagery and video – so placing employees that have achieved the EVP as a mission will validate it. NOT interview style boring employee videos.

They engage with life events style material They have a unique sense of 'intelligent humour' – tapping into this will help elevate you.

Content Ideas

Elevating your brand above the competitors

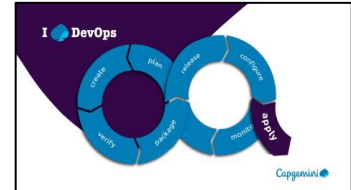


Case Example

Similar campaigns I have developed:

Using an own inhouse tech team consisting of DevOps and Software Engineers we performed a workshop enabling us to understand what would attract them to a company and how they react to pieces of content shown to them. While they reacted positively to some of the current Capgemini messaging, they felt that some of the imagery did not resonate with them. Some of this imagery was perceived as too corporate and not relevant to their industry. We then performed research using channels such as Reddit to help us to understand that wider humour and what appeals to DevOps and Software Engineers in particular. Their industry humour and tone of voice is very unique and would not speak to someone outside of this target market. This is useful as getting the tone of voice right will enable us to get a more targeted and relevant response rate. Its highly probable that outside of the Engineers demographic, the audience are unlikely to understand the message/humour.

This concept is all about letting the target candidate know that this is an aspirational business but that it differs from your usual large organization. There is humour, fun and as an employer you understand your audience – how to speak TO them, not AT them and that besides obvious skills, you offer something that will resonate with them not just in work but also out of work.





After testing numerous video concepts with the target demographic, it was apparent that there are industry wide ‘in’ jokes and while we don’t want to make sweeping industry statements, there is certainly a love for Sci – Fi and problem solving! These short blast online video concepts are aimed at pulling the audience in with humour so they can find out more about the opportunities. We will retarget the ‘top of mind’ audience who are not ready to immediately apply with different video.

There are several videos that we would run within this particular I Love DevOps campaign.

1. Go forth and automate – R2D2 concept
2. Finding Bugs – Ladybird Concept
3. I love containers – Containers/Containerise Concept

All of these would enable the candidates to find out more by linking through to directly to the microsite and watching the video there – any others that don’t link through or apply would then be retargeted with the next phase of the campaign.

Awareness Content

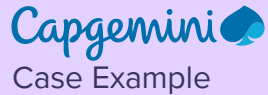
Using short burst video content



Case Example

Consideration Content

Imagery

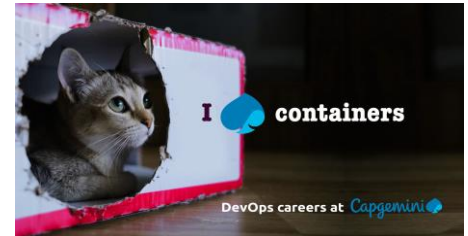


The aim of this was to entice the next stage of the audience through to read more about working for Capgemini by linking through to the new microsite.

The concepts remains fluid throughout this process and keeps the 'humour' element running. The CTA is always about finding out more about the roles at Capgemini.

There are several images that we ran at this phase of the I Love DevOps campaign.

Disruption – Shouting man
Finding Bugs – Magnify Concept
I love containers – Cat Concept
Agile – Yoga concept



Conversion

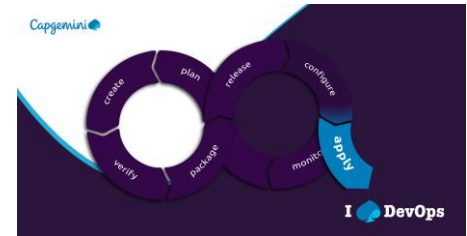
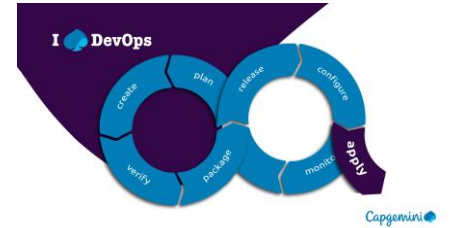
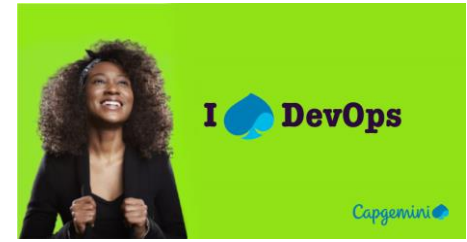
Imagery, Copy,
CTA

The aim of this stage is to entice the next stage of drive the interested audience directly to apply. The CTA is Apply Now and was used in both concepts of the campaigns

There are several images that we ran at this phase of the I Love Dev Ops campaign.

I Love DevOps – Happy Girl
I Love DevOps– Happy Guy
I Love DevOps – Infinity Concept
I Love DevOps – Infinity Concept

All take them through to one of the following:
Microsite Apply Area
Facebook Lead Form (Suggestion – please see suggested notes around social conversion)



Social

Driving applications
through social
content

Capgemini 
Case Example

 **Capgemini**
Sponsored

Like Page

Do you know how to balance speed of delivery with the risk of letting the cat out of the bag too quickly? If you're a DevOps Ace then find out more about a career with Capgemini.



Become a DevOps Ace with Capgemini
Love your career. Ace your career.

Like Comment Share

1.2K 14 Comments 56 Shares

 **Capgemini**
Sponsored

Like Page

Luckily, touching your toes is not a prerequisite for a career at Capgemini. However having an open and innovative outlook, along with exceptional communication skills will mean you can ace your DevOps career.



Become a DevOps Ace with Capgemini
Love your career. Ace your career.

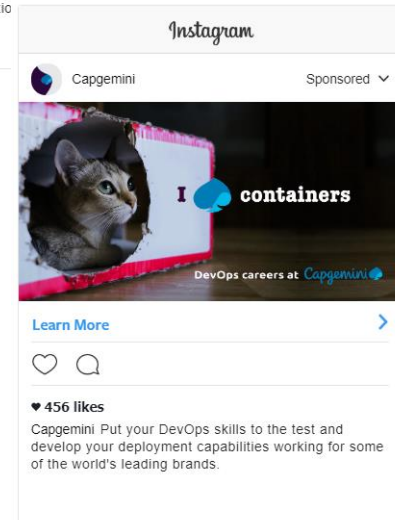
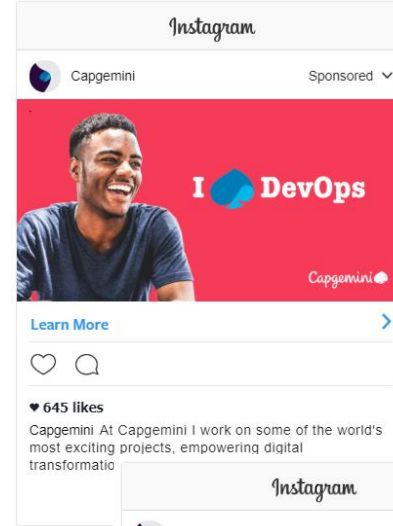
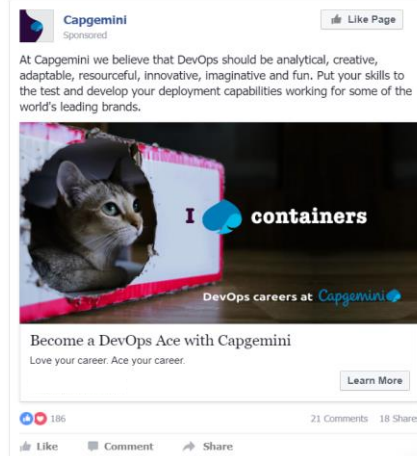
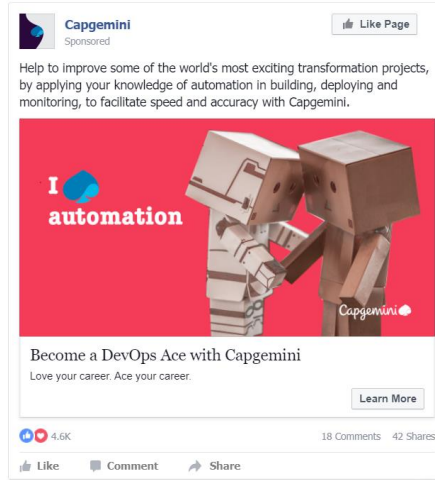
Like Comment Share

186 21 Comments 18 Shares

More Social Examples

Aspiration and opportunity

Capgemini 
Case Example



Video and Gifs

After testing numerous video concepts with the target demographic we also understand the importance of the opportunity that Capgemini offers. The audience was still adamant that we should speak to them in a way that only they would understand and through using key phrases, words and terminology we have developed several videos that appeal to them in this way.

There are several videos that we would run within this I Love DevOps campaign.

1. Flashing Programs Video– Instagram Concept
2. Aspiration Gif– Infinity Concept
3. Innovation Video – Infinity Concept

All of these would enable the candidates to find out more by linking through to directly to the microsite and watching the video there – any others that don't link through or apply would then be retargeted with the next phase of the campaign.



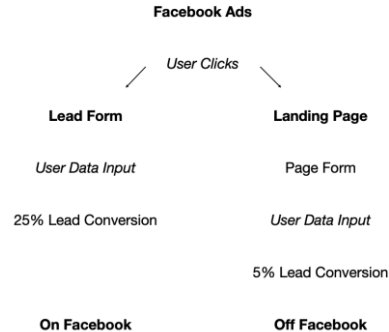
Facebook Lead Form Stats

Use Lead Forms to increase the volume of applications in a campaign due to Facebook's integrated lead generation forms having a higher level of conversion and ease of completion over exiting the site and loading landing pages.

A Facebook form with 3 questions for example, has an average conversion rate of 25.4%, [Wordstream, 2019] which aligns with previous campaign data that achieves 27.5% conversion on Facebook lead generation campaign. Comparatively, landing pages average around a 5% conversion rate whilst also asking the same amount of questions through an on page form.

This allows us to showcase how lead forms can produce 5 times the volume of applications over landing pages whilst retaining the same level of intent by number of questions asked.

Additional usage for a landing page includes receiving applications from our advertisements running on other platforms that don't have built in lead generation. One of those platforms used in our campaign is Reddit.



Facebook

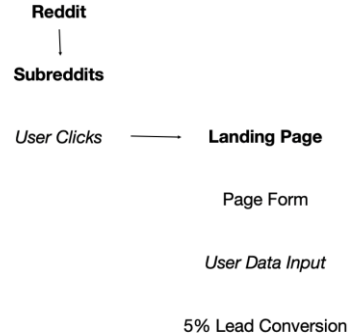
Reddit Advertising

Registered members submit content to the site such as links, text posts, and images, which are then voted up or down by other members.

The reason why Reddit is a great place to advertise job vacancies is due to the nature of its platform which allows users to congregate in subreddits, effectively topics, that they can follow and start conversations within, and that we can directly advertise on selected specific subreddits.

This means we can research and identify subreddits where our potential candidates are spending time. Greater still, users will have to be on that subreddit to then see our ads, meaning they are already in the right mind space thinking and actively engaging with the topic we are advertising around - increasing in the moment relevancy.

When we activate the campaign, we ensure any traffic coming from the platform is then funnelled into the landing page, whereby we then see an average application conversion rate of 5%.

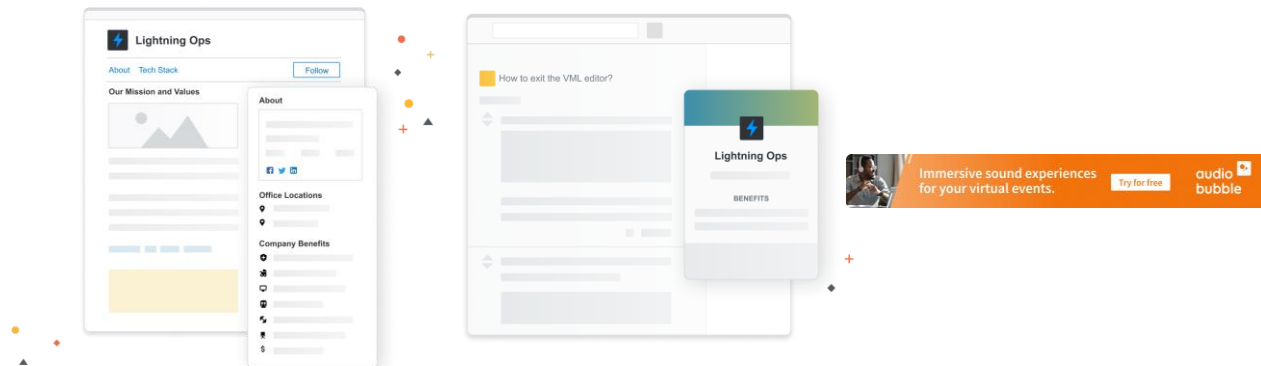


Reddit

Stack Overflow & Github

Stack Overflow have a new strategy that focuses around Employer Branding that allows you to target users with features such as the ability to tell your company story, post links to new content, Easy to develop ads, display and sponsorship.

80% of developers visit the site regularly so this is an integral part of placing the message in front of the right people.



GitHub is the world's largest software development platform. It is a place where developers can host and review their code, manage projects, and build software alongside 31 million developers.

Basically, it is a site where developers store their code and share it with others for collaboration, further development or simply usage.

Measuring Success

By placing tracking pixels along all areas of the candidate journey we can now understand some key information to get under the skin of the ROI of Employer Brand. That data includes:

- **Employer Brand Awareness**
- **Page and Website Views**
- **Clicks on Job Description**
- **Drop Offs**
- **Submitted Applications**
- **Application Quality**
- **Video Views**
- **Direct Hire Conversion**

Long Term Impact to the organisation:

- **More qualified hire**
 - **Revenue increase as a result of new hires**
 - **Diversity hiring etc**
- Through implementing a strong employer brand strategy we should decrease costs through:
- **Reducing resourcing time and cost through more qualified and relevant hires**
 - **Reducing recruitment costs by driving candidates through a direct hire strategy**
 - **Reduce cost and reliance on expensive job boards and solutions**
 - **Reduce drop off rates in the interview process due to a more informed candidate experience – resulting in reducing CPH, Readvertising Costs and Rehire Costs**

Managing resources and budget



- Start by understanding what the capabilities of the specialists in my team – does one have a passion for media, while the other has creative potential or flair?
- Understand whether these are areas for specialising and upskilling
- Create a training plan for these key areas to further develop their skills
- Utilise my experience to upskill research capability in house to reduce any external costs
- Work with external network to support this approach at low or no cost
- Develop regular employer brand workshops to strategize and align all of our expertise to set ourselves up for success
- Hold regular thought leadership workshops using my experience, past cases etc - with the team to encourage ideas, innovation and knowledge sharing
- Regular 121 coaching and leadership sessions
- Commission internal market research projects for each team member to achieve and present so we stay on top of the market

Scenario 2

Setting us up for success

- Through a strategic social channel approach, costs would be kept down by launching awareness video and content across the key locations to build employer brand awareness and interest prior to active hiring/recruitment marketing
- Use Facebook, Instagram, Youtube to increase employer brand awareness at the target audiences – continue to remarket through the funnel with relevant content
- Targeted advertising and content through Github, Stack Overflow. Retarget any candidates not applying with new content. Programmatic and google advertising aimed at key industry blogs and websites.
- Keep creative, video and copywriting capability inhouse developed by the team.
- Work with marketing and external agency such as Ping Pong to ensure we have the Chinese marketing approach correct and guarantee success.
- Study the digital portal results for 2021 to ensure we use the optimum channels to market for each region.
- Look across all regions and look for job board trends and what regions they operate with most success where we can combine a strategy that will reduce cost.
- Develop localised EVP messaging for each region that will elevate and entice candidates based on initiative, benefits, compensation, salary, workplace, culture etc.

Scenario 2

Channels to market

- Set KPIs that will measure success based on the objectives of the campaigns – work with recruitment and TA to understand what those objectives are
- First few weeks should be focused on awareness so we should start the strategy by focusing on measuring more fluffy KPIs such as CTR, Engagement, Video Views, Blog and Website Visits – these should give us a clear indication if we are raising Employer Brand awareness across each region
- Conversion – After the initial phase we should shift our attention to application numbers – have they increased as a direct result of the campaign? Are they relevant or qualified candidates – has relevancy improved? If not do we need to relook at optimising the campaign or making changes to targeting?
- After this we can now start to measure direct hire stats – have the recruiting team hired as a direct result of the campaign? What is CPH as a result of the campaign? Has the campaign influenced areas such as Time to hire etc?
- Are the team more knowledgeable as a result and more skilled – do they learn from the campaigns? Are they able to make informed strategic decisions on their own?

Scenario 2

Measuring Performance

Employer Brand Strategy

Supporting Information and Data



	Employer Branding Trends 2021										
Research agency	CSR & Sustainability	Agile and Remote Cultures	Purpose	Diversity	Wellness	Training	Technology	Changing EVP	Job Security	Covid Response	Employee Experience
Human Resources today 	1	1	1					1			
Accenture 			1				1				
Forrester 											
Mc Kinsey 		1	1	1		1					
Universum 	1			1	1	1	1	1			
Randstad 		1			1				1		
Employer Branding College 	1	1	1	1	1	1	1				
Nexgoal 		1		1	1						
HRO Today 	1	1								1	
Maximum 							1				1
People Matters 		1		1	1						
	4	7	4	5	5	3	4	2	1	1	1

Note: Ctrl + Click on coloured dots in each section for links to research origin

Employer Brand Trends 2021

Looking across research agency trend reports for 2021 we identify the key employer branding trends identifying what topics are consistently ranking in order of importance across both qualitative and quantitative research.

Employer Brand in 2021/22

As we come out of the global pandemic, the way we all think about careers and opportunities is changing. Talent is moving out of big business and ready to resign to start their own businesses – here are some further insights and key pillars we discovered throughout our research..



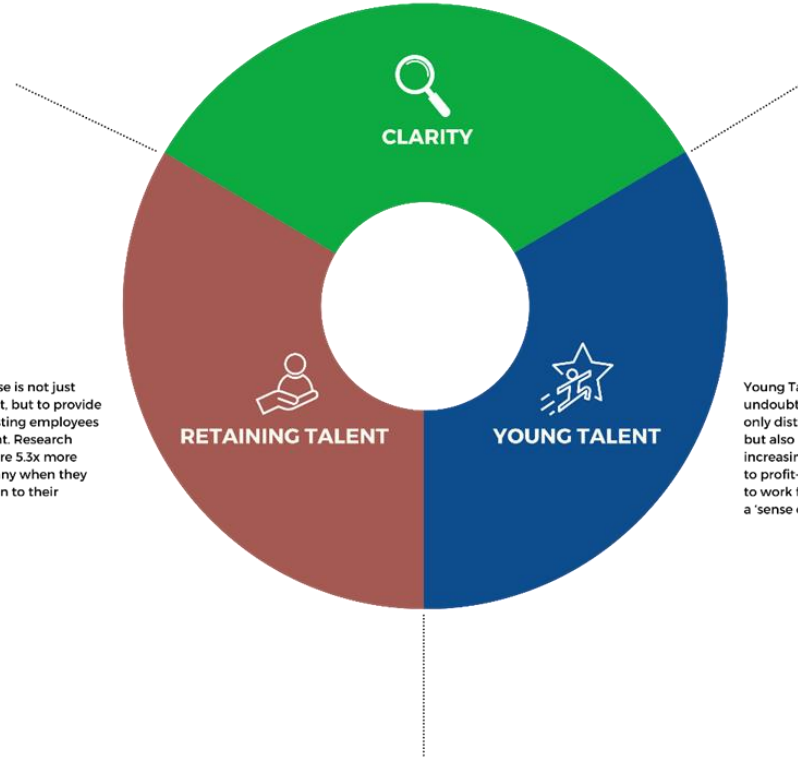
Employer Brand with purpose

The way in which organisations differentiate themselves in the talent market is more important than ever, you need to be powered up to recruit, retain and engage the right people. A strong employer brand will enable you to compete for the best talent and establish credibility

Clarity: Clarity of purpose is essential to potential employees from the offset, not just when they're hired. 79% of adults would consider a company's mission and purpose before applying

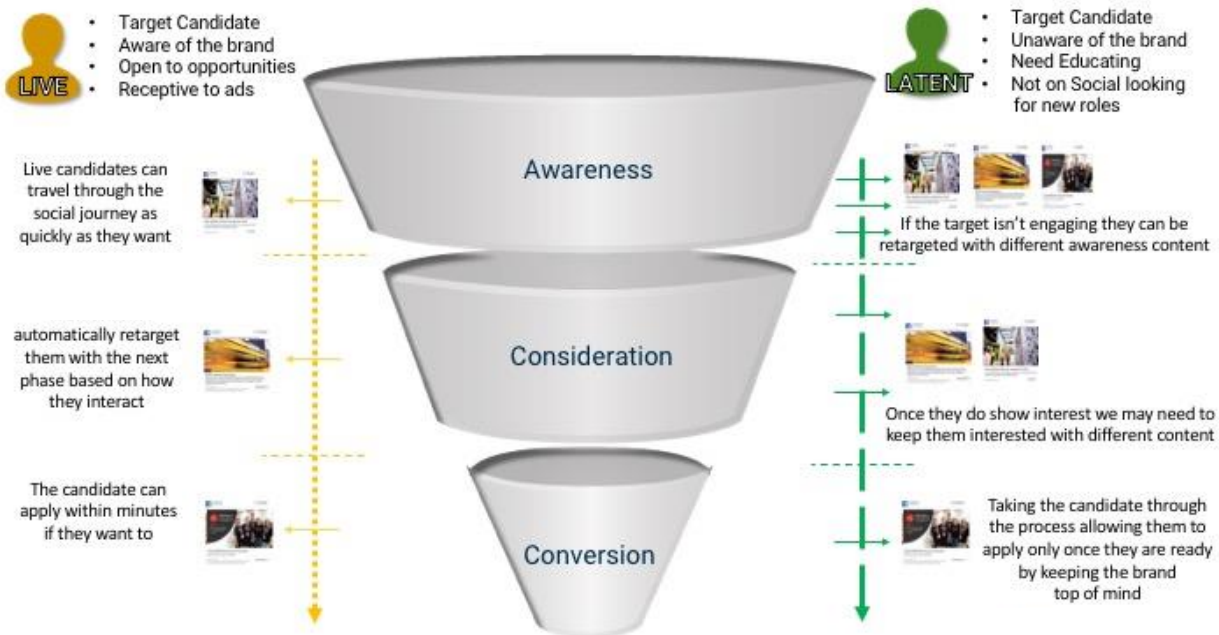
Retaining Talent: Purpose is not just valuable to attract talent, but to provide meaningful work to existing employees and retaining their talent. Research shows that Millennials are 5.3x more likely to stay at a company when they have a strong connection to their employers purpose.

Young Talent: Younger talent are undoubtedly the future, but they are not only distinct in their fluency with tech but also by the fact that they are increasingly purpose-driven as opposed to profit-driven. 60% of millennials chose to work for their current employer due to a 'sense of purpose'



The key to any successful Employer Brand is ensuring the authentic content created is placed directly in front of the target audience. To do this we need to understand where each cohort in each market spend most of their time online and how they look for a job. This would be best achieved through a confident online retargeting/marketing strategy.

Its integral that we use a retargeting strategy when activating employer brand content across all channels as only 10% of the talent market are ever actively looking to apply at one time, by using 100% of the talent audience and remarketing them – this means we are able to ensure we stay top of mind of all relevant talent and be their employer of choice when they are ready to apply. Below is how we take the candidates through a social media employer brand campaign driving them to apply direct.



Employer Brand Activation

The same approach to employer brand would happen across all markets but the type of content and activation would differ

Thanks

