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A HOSPITALITY RECRUITER'S PLAYBOOK

FOR HIRING TECH TALENT.

Activating Talent.

Introduction

Most hospitality companies aren't traditionally known for being tech-first. This idea is especially true for the more well-established hotel, restaurant, and travel brands (which we define as belonging to hospitality) that have been around for generations. However, this is a pain point that many companies, both large and small, often experience in the industry.

In some cases, companies are having trouble keeping up with the pace of digital change to be more competitive. In others, hospitality companies already have strong technological infrastructures and they're on the forefront of innovation — but not many people are aware. In both instances, and generally every case in between, the products and services that these businesses use and provide to customers are being digitized more and more (along with businesses across many other industries.)

In light of this increased digitization, the need for experienced tech talent among their ranks is a key concern for hospitality recruiters. In order to secure this talent, hospitality companies have to frame themselves as places where tech innovation is prevalent. They need to be seen as organizations where a techie can thrive, which is a significant rebrand for what these businesses have been known for in the past. And the "tech talent" they need to appeal to isn't just engineers, data scientists, cybersecurity experts or other highly technical IT professionals. **Generally every role in a business today is deeply rooted in technology and candidates understand that advancing their digital proficiencies is a key part of present and future career success.** Candidates want to work at places that can stoke their demand for working with cutting edge tech — no matter their department.

With an unemployment rate for tech jobs at almost 3 percent, the tech talent market is fierce right now. **Hospitality companies, large and small, have to rebrand themselves well if they want to recruit against big names like the Microsofts and Googles of the world, as well as the hot new tech startups emerging regularly.**

So how do hospitality brands compete?

Ultimately, they need to invest in the perks, tools and cultures that tech talent wants. Then, it's vital that these businesses effectively use employer branding to showcase their efforts and reframe themselves as being tech-first. And in this guide, we'll explore how recruiters can tap into the power of branding so they can onboard more of the in-demand employees they seek.

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About This Guide

This guide is intended to provide hospitality recruiters and hiring stakeholders with actionable takeaways they can immediately implement to enhance their branding and talent acquisition strategies.

We listened to dozens of hours of conversations with talent stakeholders and researched ongoing recruitment trends in hospitality. We learned that the demand for tech talent is at a fever pitch in the industry. Companies want to position themselves as tech-savvy employers and operators so they can acquire the professionals they need to grow — and many recognize that branding can be a magic key to unlock this door.

We tapped into our employer branding expertise to collect and share best practices on how hospitality companies can appeal to today's tech talent market. We thought about the many nuances of what it takes to create effective branded content. Then, we built a series of comprehensive worksheets that recruitment professionals can use to start or evolve their branding efforts.

With these worksheets and the rest of the insights in this ebook, we hope to help recruiters onboard more of the tech talent they're after.

Why Employer Branding Is Vital for Changing Perceptions

In this section, we'll explore what employer branding is and why it's a vital part of staying competitive in today's white-hot talent market. We'll also look at why hospitality companies need to invest in branding if they want to reintroduce themselves to the world as the tech-first businesses that attract technical pros.

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The Basics of Branding

Employer branding is essentially your company's reputation. And just like a human's reputation, there are a number of elements that can comprise this unique image of you. How does it treat people (customers and employees?) How does it speak? What are its values? What does it invest its time and resources in?

The combination of these answers — as well as responses to many other questions — are what pop into the public's mind when they hear your company name. This is your employer brand.

Building a holistic brand takes time and nuance. Because it's influenced by so many elements, companies have to be deliberate in how they approach each aspect individually. For example, leaders that want to evolve their brand image have to analyze and restructure how their business treats people. Once that's mastered, they can move onto building the company's voice, values and so forth.

Building these elements should never be rushed and they should also never be set and forgotten. A brand is what sets a company apart from its competitors and attracts new talent to the business. **Maintaining a well-built brand can be very beneficial to recruiting because a strong employee brand cuts a company's cost-per-hire in half and three-quarters of job seekers are more likely to apply to a company that maintains its brand well.**

READ MORE:

A Brand Blueprint: Building a Brand That Wins Customers & Candidates

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"Tech candidates, more than any other candidates out there, are in high demand and require a much more tailored discussion before choosing who to work for," said Alexa Murtagh, Built In's senior talent acquisition partner. "They don't want to hear from me, a recruiter, and would rather organically find the companies they want to work for."
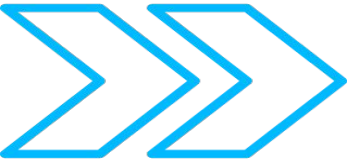
Along these lines, it's also vital to know that professionals love hearing from actual employees. In fact, an employee's voice is three times more trustworthy than the CEOs in branded content. The more that a company can tap into the candid and personal experiences of real employees, the more a piece of branded content will appeal to candidates. Murtagh says that recruiters and PR professionals should let technologists do the talking because hearing from recruiters could turn tech candidates away.

"The reality is we don't know enough about the technology they work with every day to have the robust conversation candidates need to be convinced to come work for you," said Murtagh. "By spotlighting the tech employees you already have at your company, you'll be that much closer to engaging the tech talent you desire."

Branding as a Bridge Between Hospitality and Technology

Since a brand is a company's reputation, a business could leverage its image to position itself as customer-focused, employee-first, philanthropic, on the cutting-edge of innovation or some combination of these and other traits.

Many hospitality companies today have very well-established brands that have earned them customers and loyal employees for decades. But unfortunately, their brand images may lack certain attributes that catch the attention of today's tech talent like: embracing advanced technology like AI and data science; using advanced coding languages and techniques; building innovative and effective digital products and experiences; or having an infrastructure that supports remote work or being a caregiver at home.

Employer branding is a tool that hospitality companies can use to add these and many other competitive qualities to their image — qualities that could sway tech professionals in droves. **And businesses in hospitality are on the right track because they're beginning to understand the importance of leaning away from being a hospitality company to being merely a tech company.**

"Every company is a technology company, no matter what product or service it provides," said Stephenie Stone, CIO of the Americas at M+W Group. "The companies that embrace this fact are the ones that shape our world."

"

Today, we are less interested in the distinction between technology and non-technology companies because there are very few successful companies that are not technology companies."

SIVARAMAKIRSHNAN SOMASEGAR
MANAGING DIRECTOR AT MADRONA VENTURE GROUP AND THE FORMER HEAD OF
MICROSOFT'S DEVELOPER DIVISION

No False Advertising

One in three professionals have <u>left a job within their first 90 days</u> because they experienced a disconnect between their experiences and how the company's brand was portrayed. You don't want to contribute to that statistic. Don't promote what you don't have.

It's important that hospitality companies (and every business, in every industry) take a hard look at their infrastructure, culture, perks, etc. and analyze them before promoting them to candidates. These audits can be beneficial for the business and its existing employee base because they offer opportunities to improve a number of internal elements based on what your workforce and candidates actually want.

An easy way to get this process started is through surveys. Ask employees their thoughts on the company culture and how it can be improved. Ask about the perks and benefits they appreciate most and ones they would like to see introduced. Survey technical teams and their leaders on the technologies they love, hate, and want to see more of in the business. Survey new hires on what their recruitment and onboarding experiences were like. Get creative in what you inquire about and who you ask. But always keep employee engagement and candidate acquisition in mind.

Learning from employees can organically improve the business and the employee experience from the inside out. Acting on these insights also sets the groundwork for having engaging topics to showcase in employer branding content. Listen to the feedback and encourage leadership to make changes where they can. Changing a tech stack or elements of the company culture, for instance, may take time but it's ultimately worth it because employees will be happier and candidates will be that much more interested in what you have to say.

The Playbook for Employer Branding Success

Delivering effective employer branding content is often not as simple as posting an iPhone video of an engineer at their desk discussing their favorite snack in the kitchen. It can involve a number of stakeholders, an editing process, a photoshoot, and a number of other complex components. But fear not — we built a playbook that outlines these components from ideation to execution.

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Intro to Branding 101

Here at Built In, we've spent a lot of time thinking about employer branding and how it's done. And we want to pass those insights to you so you can recruit the tech candidates you need. There are a couple of very important basics to keep in mind when building branded content.

- **Keep content streamlined.** The deeper you can dive into one topic, the better. Get specific and don't be afraid to get in-the-weeds. However, don't try to force too many ideas into one piece of content. For instance, you might want to highlight an innovative digital product the team is building. And through the lens of that project, you may be able to discuss the cutting-edge technology teams are using to build it. But try not to introduce more topics than that. And if employees have a lot to say about the tech infrastructure they're using, maybe dedicate an entire branding asset to that conversation!

- **Always keep a tech-first mentality.** Lean into branding that will work to position your hospitality company as more of a tech-driven business whenever possible.

- **Focus on one audience at a time.** Always keep your target readership in mind and make sure every word resonates with them, and only them. You might be able to send messages to two audiences if they're closely related, like engineering leaders and engineering individual contributors. But don't deviate from the core audience too much.

> *Employer branding is a pretty low-cost investment. What's key is that you identify where your ideal tech talent spends most of their time and make sure your company message is there. However, you must make sure it's educational content first and not just a sales pitch."*

ALEXA MURTAGH
SENIOR TALENT ACQUISITION PARTNER AT BUILT IN

Our research has shown us that tech pros today value:

- ✓ **Using cutting-edge technologies and solving interesting challenges**

- ✓ **Professional development opportunities**

- ✓ **A healthy, inclusive and remote-friendly company culture**

- ✓ **Perks for the modern era (e.g. mental health resources, child care assistance)**

- ✓ **Fair salaries, regardless of their geographic location**

- ✓ **Remote work options**

- ✓ **An efficient and welcoming interview and onboarding process**

- ✓ **Being valued despite coming from a non-traditional tech background**

Ready to give branding a shot?

Use the worksheets below to plan and execute employer branding content around these topics and any others you'd like applicants (and even current staff) to be aware of.

Plan Content

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What's the goal of the content? *Think about the central reason you're investing in this employer branding content asset.*

☐ Boost brand awareness

☐ Increase social media following

☐ Improve reputation as a tech company

☐ Other _____

☐ Improve applicant traffic

What's the thesis of this content? *Identify the key message you want this content to send. Each content asset should largely focus on one message. Examples of a thesis include: showcase an innovative tech project, describe how engineering team uses certain dev tools, showcase cross-team collaboration, etc.*

Thesis: _____

Who is the target audience? *Think about who you want this message to reach. Some examples might be: engineering team leads, diverse hires, entry-level UX candidates, etc.*

Target audience: _____

What team do you plan to feature in this content? *The chosen team should be able to speak to your thesis, content goal and audience the best. Multiple teams can be be represented in the same asset so long as the interviewee list is not too lengthy.*

☐ Engineering

☐ UX

☐ Data

☐ Design

☐ QA

☐ Business development

☐ Marketing

☐ Sales

☐ Finance

☐ HR

☐ Product

☐ Other _____

Create Content

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Interview Details

Interviewee 1 name & title: _____

Interviewee 2 name & title: _____

Interviewee 3 name & title: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interview location:

☐ In person I Location: _____

☐ Video/remote

☐ Email/written I Deadline for responses _____

Interviewee date: _____

Will a photo or video shoot be necessary? Y / N

Photo/video shoot date: _____

Photo/video shoot location: _____

Who will write the content post-interview? _____

Who will edit the content before publication? _____

Does a department leader(s) need to approve the content? Y / N

If so, who? _____

Estimated publication date: _____

Where will the published asset live?

☐ Company blog

☐ Newsletter

☐ Webinar

☐ Third-party platform (list platforms below)

☐ Press release

☐ Video

☐ Social media *(list platforms below)*

☐ Other _____

Social media platforms where content will live: _____ / _____ / _____ / _____ / _____ /

Third-party platforms where content will live: _____ / _____ / _____ / _____ / _____ /

Create Content

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Building out questions:

Make sure each interview question serves the thesis, content goal and the audience. Also keep your medium in mind. Short-form pieces (e.g for Instagram) require fewer questions. Long-form content (e.g. blog posts, YouTube) can feature more questions. Try to make the questions as nuanced as possible to get more candid and specific responses from interviewees, which makes for more engaging content. And be sure be sure to edit written responses for length and clarity. Reference the sample scenario below to for an example of question-building for a branding interview.

Example scenario:

Thesis: Highlight the innovative tech projects the engineering team is building with cutting-edge coding languages.

Goal: Attract skilled engineering candidates

Audience: Skilled engineering candidates

Interviewees: Engineering manager and engineering individual contributor

Questions:

- What languages does your team rely on most?
- What's the latest and greatest project your team built using these languages?
- How does your team approach code reviews when using these languages?
- What's an upcoming project that your team is excited about tackling using these languages and best practices?

Your Questions:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Promotion

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Where and how will this content be distributed once completed? *Keep your audience and goal in mind. Only post content where you are certain your audience will see it.*

Internal promotions:

☐ Internal newsletter

☐ Promote article in email signature

☐ Staff to share on their personal feeds

☐ Social media (list platforms) _____ / _____ / _____

☐ Highlight during company meeting

☐ Other _____

External promotions:

☐ Email newsletter

☐ Display ads

☐ Events

☐ Paid social media *(list platforms)* _____ / _____ /_____

☐ Organic social media *(list platforms)* _____ / _____ /_____

☐ Sponsored emails

☐ Youtube/ video ads

☐ Other _____

What design elements will be needed?

☐ Digital ad imagery

☐ Paid social ad imagery

☐ Organic social imagery

☐ Email signature image

☐ Imagery for content pieces

☐ Other _____

Examples of Effective Branded Content

Now you have the framework to plan, build and promote awesome branded content. Let's take a look at content other companies created using this same structure to spark more inspiration in your continued efforts.

<u>Example:</u>
Vue vs. React vs. Angular: Developers Share Their Favorite Tech

Using cutting-edge technology to build innovative digital solutions is the hallmark of any technical team — especially for front-end developers whose work gets placed directly in the hands of users. Vue, React and Angular are the three big frameworks used by front-end dev teams. The professionals in this piece dive into which framework their team uses and why, as well as the projects they're building with their chosen tool. A story like this can highlight a number of aspects that a potential candidate with specialized technical skills would find interesting and what they can expect to use if they join.

- **<u>Goal</u>**: Appeal to technical talent by highlighting innovative tools and projects
- **<u>Audience</u>**: Front-end developers
- **<u>Experience</u>**: Entry- to senior-level

Although Senior Software Engineer Peter Skinner has only dabbled in Angular and React, he's found that Vue is a better option for the way he thinks about projects. The PathAI developer said the all-in-one syntax of React components can be difficult to use and starting Angular projects can be tricky.
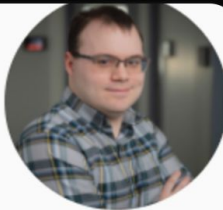
Vue vs. React. vs. Angular: Which is your team's preferred programming tool?

When we initially picked Vue as our framework of choice, a lot of factors went into that decision. While some of our developers were experienced with React or Angular, others had not used any modern frameworks before. With such a diverse background of engineers coming to the table, our main priority was to find a framework that was easy to pick up, familiar to most and allowed all of our developers to get going quickly.

We found that Vue gave our engineers the most flexibility, allowing for non-TypeScript components with familiar syntax for both React and Angular developers. It was a middle ground between all of our options but also became extremely useful for our products.

Tell us about the most recent project you worked on using this tool.

One of our main applications of Vue at PathAI is an image annotation

How you can recreate it:

Think about the technical team(s) behind a recent or upcoming project that's big for the business. Ask members of that team to take readers on a journey through the ins and outs of the major technology they're using to build the project. Ask them to pull the curtain back as much as they can to give candidates a holistic sense of the technology infrastructure on the team and what it's being put toward.

READ THE STORY HERE

Example:
How to Create an Engineering Culture That Attracts Top Talent

Team culture is an important topic for many engineers. Most developers want to know what a team is like before they join it. This story gives engineering professionals the chance to learn about the cultures of different tech teams from leaders — the people who most often set the baseline for a team's culture. These leaders dive into how they build and maintain culture, which gives candidates a clear picture as what each team is like.

- **Goal**: Appeal to technical talent and team leaders that value culture
- **Audience**: Engineering managers and individual contributors
- **Experience**: Entry- to senior-level

How you can recreate it:

Ask your CTO or another engineering leader how they approach team culture. Encourage them to share examples of high-level and day-to-day tactics they use to foster and individual agency and collaboration. How do they unite the team while also giving engineers freedom to be their own person? The more nuanced and candid your leader can get about culture, the more it will interest candidates.

READ THE STORY HERE

Example:
Finding the Right Note: Why This Music Tech Company Embraces Experimentation

This story allowed one company, Reverb, to take readers on a journey through the various elements that make up its culture of "experimentation." A product manager on the team broke down the ways that employees across disciplines at the company are given the tools and agency to experiment their way through interesting challenges — all of which builds the foundation for a culture employees are excited to be a part of.

- **Goal**: Appeal to culture-driven talent
- **Audience**: Candidates across all disciplines
- **Experience**: Entry- to management-level

Tell us a little more about Reverb and your role at the company.

Since launching in 2013, Reverb has grown into the largest online marketplace dedicated to musical instruments. Reverb helps anyone — from large retailers and well-known musicians to local music shops and everyday players — to sell musical instruments online. I'm the staff product manager for Reverb's inventory and shipping team and our mandate is simple: we make it easier for individuals to sell their musical instruments on Reverb. I'm responsible for defining our product strategy and business outcomes, and making sure they align with wider company goals. A lot of my work involves evaluating and prioritizing opportunities to solve user problems — like how we can help less experienced sellers appreciate what their music gear is worth — and making sure priorities are understood across the organization.

Tell us more about the culture of experimentation at Reverb.

Our product teams work closely with our analytics team to ensure we can measure the impact of the changes we make to our site and mobile apps with proper experimentation. It's universally understood that not every product change will be a winner, and it's okay to launch a feature that ultimately might not succeed. The important thing is that you learn more about how buyers and sellers are using Reverb so you can continuously improve their experience.

How you can recreate it:

Can you summarize your culture in a few short words? What are elements that make your culture engaging for employees across the entire organization? Focus on these ideas and try to uncover a few stories of moments when team members embodied this culture. Use this piece to recount some of these stories. Dive into initiatives or methodologies the company or leaders have in place to maintain the prized culture.

READ THE STORY HERE

Example:
How to Support Professional Development in a Digital Workplace

Tech talent today across generally every speciality values professional development. They want to be certain that their employee will give them plenty of opportunities to advance their existing skills and learn new ones. And there's no reason an employee's professional development should suffer just because they're remote. This story breaks down how companies facilitate that remote professional development.

- **Goal**: Appeal to talent that cares about their professional development and career advancement
- **Audience**: Candidates across all disciplines
- **Experience**: Entry- to management-level

How has professional development at <u>Simply Business</u> changed in light of COVID-19?

As the business world continues to adapt to these new working environments, it has become evident that our employees are expected to learn and adapt to a changing environment faster than ever before. While the scope of roles may be shifting, it is essential for us to prepare our workforce with the tools they need to not only do their jobs, but also to focus on their individual development goals. We shifted our development opportunities to be more tech-friendly, which promotes self-directed learning, because we want our employees to own their career and development.

Our LMS infrastructure is built on user testing and feedback."

What interesting tools is your team using to support remote professional development?

Fortunately, our people strategy has adapted well to the changing climate. We strive to create personalized, bite-sized, blended learning experiences that are accessible anywhere, anytime. These elements are at the forefront when thinking about the technology we onboard. Our new LMS Spark gives learners access to the entire LinkedIn Learning library. It provides employees the ability to learn anything, like leadership development or even photography.

How you can recreate it:

Think about your existing professional development initiatives. Then analyze them through the lens of your remote infrastructure. Can employees effectively get that development virtually? If so, highlight all the ways digital development is possible. Ask a member of the people team how the company approaches remote skill advancement. Or ask a team lead how they encourage their direct reports to grow. You can also ask a ground-floor employee how they've taken advantage of remote development.

READ THE STORY HERE

Conclusion

In order to secure new tech talent, hospitality companies have to tap into the perspectives and expertise of their existing tech talent. Doing so also helps team members feel valued within the business. This is a dual-sided benefit of employee-based branding that a press releases or a generic company statement on social media simply cannot do. But remember, you can't attract tech talent by branding features of the company that don't actually exist.

Overall, effective branding can lead to more hires. Hospitality companies that lean into a tech-first mindset — and use branding to materialize that mindset for candidates — can win in today's battle for talent. And with this playbook, we hope that hospitality recruiters and stakeholders can approach their talent goals armed with the tools they need to attract the in-demand professionals they seek.

United We Tech.

Built In helps tech professionals stay on top of trends and news, expand their networks and carve out futures at companies they believe in.

Let's work together.

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