

How EdTechs Can Compete for Top Tech Talent.

Build an EVP and Brand That Will Win Over Tech Candidates

#FINDYOURFORWARD

Introduction.

Edtech is having a big moment. U.S. companies in the industry <u>raised</u> \$8.3 billion in 2021. Not only that, **candidates are more interested in** edtech than ever before: it ranked as the most-searched-for industry in 2021 across our 3.4 million monthly visitor base.

When market growth coincides with candidate interest, it means companies should be able to find the talent they need to scale their businesses. But with a <u>2 percent unemployment rate in tech</u>, that's easier said than done.

Tech professionals — especially the highly sought-after technical experts like engineers and security specialists — have every opportunity to shop around for the best offer based on what interests them most. Many of these experts are enticed by the idea of working at a prestigious tech employer like Apple, Netflix or another Fortune 500 tech company.

Others may not view edtech companies through the same lens as MAANG (formerly referenced as MAANG until Facebook became Meta) companies when they think of places they can have a fulfilling tech career. Edtech companies must position themselves as employers that offer their team members interesting challenges to solve and opportunities to continue developing their tech skill set.

So can edtech employers overcome these hurdles and compete for talent with today's titans of tech? Absolutely!



First, they must evolve their employee value proposition around the offerings that candidates actually care about. From benefits that create greater work-life balance to professional development opportunities, there's a lot that edtech companies can invest in to boost their EVP.

Then, edtechs must tap into the power of employer branding to showcase those elements to candidates; job seekers must be aware of the great experiences that await them if they join. And with the combination of an evolved EVP and branding around it, growing edtech companies will gain plenty of leverage in the heated battle for the most sought-after tech professionals today.

Below, we lay out what today's tech talent prioritizes most in their job search. From there, we give edtech recruiting stakeholders the insights, tools (a free worksheet!) and examples they need to create results-driven employer branding content.





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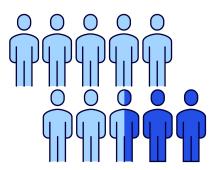
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What Tech Talent Wants Today.

This section will dive into what tech talent prioritizes during their job search and at their current employers. We tap into some key data points and insights that show what professionals care about most. From there, we dive into why edtech companies should tap into those interests to secure talent over MAANG companies and other industry competitors.

Remote Work and Flexible Hours.

Remote work is no longer a perk but a must-have if companies want to secure today's talent. More than <u>eight in 10 professionals</u> (82 percent) no longer want to spend Monday through Friday in the office. A quarter of this group want to work remotely indefinitely while the remaining, roughly 60 percent, would prefer to go in only two to three days a week. These figures are similar when looking at developers specifically: 70 percent said they want to work remotely either full time or a few days a week.



More than 8 out of 10

professionals no longer want to spend Monday through Friday in the office

It's clear that candidates today value remote work and the freedom it offers to avoid commutes, relocate and be more present at home. Edtech companies that incorporate remote work into their infrastructure will have an edge over businesses that don't.

However, edtechs must ensure that if they're going remote in any capacity — whether it be fully or hybrid — that they do it well.

Companies should clearly articulate their guidelines around remote versus in-person work. For example, is there an office space, and if so, how often are employees expected to come in? Is fully-remote work an option even though an office exists? These are some of the many questions that candidates (and current employees) need answers to. But regardless of whether an edtech company offers remote work five days a week or one day, it should operate like a remote-first company.

"As much as possible, organizations should strive to give remote and in-office employees the same experience by creating guidelines that prioritize communicating online over in-person," said Hailley Griffis, head of PR at Buffer and a co-host of the MakeWorkWork podcast. "The company should plan meetings and events with remote workers in mind."



Companies that adapt their culture and operations to remote work have an upper hand because remote employees won't feel left out and undervalued. Edtech employers that do remote work well have the greatest chance of creating and maintaining engagement for professionals who value that work style.

RETAINING YOUR REMOTE WORKFORCE

Another element of remote (and even in-person) work that's important to tech candidates today is flexible hours. Not everyone can or wants to work from 9AM to 5PM, especially if that timeline is specific to one time zone. So it's important that edtechs make room for flexible hours within teams across the company. In fact, flexible hours ranked as number nine on our top 10 most-search-for benefits of 2021 and 45 percent of developers value that element more than any other in their job search.

Edtech companies should prioritize asynchronous work and communication in their infrastructure. It will give employees more freedom to work around their schedule — instead of scheduling their lives around work — which will give the business an edge in the race for talent.

Professional Development.

Tech professionals today want to know that their employer will support career learning and growth after they onboard. Tuition reimbursement ranked as number seven in 2021's most-search-for benefits, so it's clear that candidates value professional development in all forms.



There are also many interesting insights to consider when looking at developers specifically:

- 43 percent prioritize opportunities for <u>professional</u> development in their job search
- 56 percent say professional development is their <u>reason for</u> <u>staying</u> at their current role
- 53 percent say the lack of professional development is cause for leaving their job
- An average of 26 percent said they don't know whether their company offers any upskilling or reskilling initiatives, which is cause for employee disengagement

"To overcome the developer skills shortage, software engineering leaders need to upskill and reskill their existing employees and new hires," said Bill Swanton, a <u>VP analyst at Gartner</u>. "The focus should be on developing each employee's skills ahead of demand so that they can play a broader range of roles and continue to enhance an organization's technical capabilities."

Roughly 60 percent of global businesses worldwide <u>offer mandatory</u> <u>training and/or professional development</u> for technical or soft skills. And an average of 58 percent of recruiters are currently upskilling and reskilling employees to meet their technical needs. Edtech companies that are not already on board with this growing wave of professional development investment should get started immediately.

Edtech companies also have an advantage in building professional development infrastructure since their businesses are rooted in advancing education. Additionally, large MAANG-like employers often have more red tape to cut through when it comes to employee growth and advancement. Growing edtechs can provide new and seasoned employees with more autonomy, learnings and opportunities to use their new skills on exciting projects.



Working on Innovative Projects + Using Effective Best Practices.

Speaking of exciting projects, 20 percent of developers said that being able to solve interesting challenges was their top priority in the job search. Part of successfully working on innovative projects for these technical professionals — and experts across all teams — means overcoming challenges like unplanned work, unclear direction and having inadequate technical knowledge or experience.

Most Significant Challenges Developers Face







No one wants to join a team that builds uninspired products with inefficient processes. Edtech employers are in a unique position to give candidates opportunities to work on innovative challenges as the edtech market grows and offerings differentiate.

After 2020, EdTech became synonymous with e-learning. However, that technology is no longer exclusive to schools and universities. Employers are embracing online learning at a very high rate and 40 percent of Fortune 500 companies use online learning resources to train their employees. This is one example of how edtech companies are empowering candidates to bring new ideas to the table and build the next cutting-edge solution, which could be applied to many different markets.

Additionally, as teams get larger and more complex during this period of innovation, they can create an ideal team structure along the way. MAANG companies and other large businesses have teams made up of hundreds or even thousands of contributors. Oftentimes, their best practices are set in stone (for better or for worse) and there are many obstacles to navigate when trying to adopt a new process or tool. Up and coming edtech companies may have fewer bureaucratic hoops to jump through and teams can evolve their infrastructure on the fly based on what works best.

When edtech employers offer projects and team structures that employees can get excited about, they can separate themselves from both MAANG-like companies and other edtechs in the market. All this contributes to greater retention and hiring numbers.

Competitive Salaries.

Transparency and fair pay are extremely important to today's tech talent. Here's why:

- Two in three tech professionals today value wage transparency and equitable <u>pay above all else in their job search</u>
- Six out of 10 candidates say compensation is the <u>most</u> important part of a job description
- <u>90 percent of professionals</u> think their pay should not be based on geography

The bottom line is that professionals want to know how much they stand to make before they hit "apply." They also want to be certain that their pay will be fair based on their experience and skills (and will remain so for future internal roles) rather than being based on their geographic location.



Percentage of Tech
Talent Who:



Pay transparency and pay parity are two new battlegrounds in the fight for tech talent. Edtechs that can give candidates insight on their pay before they join while also allowing employees to relocate without fear of a pay cut will have an edge over companies that don't.

"The companies that say that they will pay people the same, regardless of the personal choices they make about whether to live out of their cars or out of mansions, will have the upper hand," said Julia Pollak, chief economist at ZipRecruiter. "Pay cuts for remote work will not be received well."

Two MAANG companies — <u>Google</u> and <u>Meta</u> — adjusted their pay structures to be more geo-specific in 2021. These decisions were met with internal and public backlash as employees at both companies saw their pay reduced based on where they lived, and in some cases whether they chose to commute or work from home. Edtech companies that can avoid similar experiences will be better off for it.



Paying people based on the value they deliver to the company — **not geography** — is the equitable and easier way to go.

Katica Roy CEO & FOUNDER, Pipeline Equity

Investing in DEI Efforts.

When considering a job opportunity, 58 percent of tech professionals say diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives are <u>very important to</u> them — a figure that increases to 61 percent for BIPOC individuals.

But what initiatives do professionals want to see most? Research from our <u>2022 State of DEI in Tech Report</u> uncovered the answers.

DEI Initiatives Candidates Seek
Out Most When Looking for a Job:



DEI Initiatives That Keep Employees Engaged With Their Existing Company:

Wage transparency/equitable pay
Intentionally sourcing diverse candidates
Inclusion tactics — 18%

Transparent about employee demographics — 17%

Let's zoom in a little further on this reporting: 35 percent of professionals prioritize companies that are transparent about employee demographics. Additionally, 57 percent of candidates report seeking a potential employer's diversity metrics before making an employment decision. So diversity reporting makes a big difference for candidates interested in a company.



of candidates report seeking a potential employer's diversity metrics before making an employment decision.

Edtechs that record and report their metrics will earn the trust of current and potential employees to a greater degree. Even if the numbers are poor, edtech employers should still report their demographics, especially if their disclosures come along with news of strategies meant to improve those metrics (which branding can help with.)

Overall, there are many elements of DEI in tech that need to improve across the industry as a whole. Edtech companies that do their part to make tech more diverse, equitable and inclusive have a better chance at securing and keeping talent than businesses that are behind the pace of change.

Benefits Worth Bragging About.

What are the benefits that growing edtech companies should invest in based on what candidates want most?

Here's what our 3.4 million monthly users searched for most on our national site in 2021:

#1 Relocation Assistance	
#2 Employee Stock Purchase Plan	
#3 Sabbatical	
#4 Unlimited Vacation	
#5 Company Equity	
#6 Home Office Stipend for Remote Employees	
#7 Tuition Reimbursement	
#8 Adoption Assistance	
#9 Flexible Work Schedule	
#10 Generous Parental Leave	

As noted earlier, remote work is not on this list because it's more than simply a perk, it's an expectation. When examining this list further, it's clear that professionals today care deeply about their ability to sustain a healthy work-life balance. They not only want greater day-to-day freedom to work around their schedules with flexible hours but more support when it comes to bigger events, like welcoming a new child to their home, taking extended time away or moving to a different city.

Edtech companies that adopt these offerings can lay the foundation for an employee value proposition that's enticing enough to draw candidates away from the MAANGs and other competitors in tech.

Mission-Driven Work.

Lastly, but far from least, **59 percent of candidates are** <u>attracted</u> <u>to a company because of its mission</u>. Edtech companies have an **upperhand in this area** because their missions are often quite noteworthy: educating people with limited learning access, creating the next generation of skilled professionals, opening opportunities to those in remote locations across the globe and more.

Tapping into the good that your edtech company does and the services it provides — then letting that sentiment act as a basis for the company culture — can increase interest from candidates as well engagement for existing employees. So being a mission-driven company can pay off in the long-run around hiring and retention goals.

"No company, small or large, can win over the long run without energized employees who believe in the mission and understand how to achieve it." — Jack Welch, former General Electric CEO



Employer Branding Is Your Secret Weapon.

Now that you know what tech professionals value the most in their professional lives, you can start investing in those initiatives. However, you can't attract talent to your business if they don't know that these appealing elements exist at your company. That's where branding comes in. And in this next section, we want to help contextualize and validate why branding is worth the effort for growing edtech companies.

What's Your Brand About?

James Ellis, host of <u>The Talent Cast</u> and author of Talent Chooses You: Hire Better with Employer Branding, succinctly summed up a formula for building an appealing brand image.

"If you can name what you care about, line it up with what you reward, and then project that out to the world, you got yourself an employer brand," Ellis said.

Leaders and hiring stakeholders at edtech companies have to ask themselves what they as a collective, or what their business as an entity, value. Is it furthering the growth of the industry? Is it creating a world-class employee experience? Is it turning tech professionals into knowledgeable, highly-skilled experts? All of the above? Once that question is answered, it's up to that same group to ensure that their employee offerings match their central ambitions.

When there's alignment in those ideas and offerings, the next part — projecting out to the world — becomes much easier. And when executed correctly, the formula that Ellis laid out has a number of benefits.

The first and most pressing benefit for many edtechs today is attracting top talent. Three out of four job seekers are likely to apply for a role if the company actively manages its employer brand. Conversely, half of candidates said they would avoid working at a company that has a poor brand even if they were offered a pay bump.

Well-crafted branding messages can also affect how candidates see your business compared to competitors: 92 percent of professionals would consider leaving their employer for a chance to work at a company with an excellent brand reputation. Imagine the possibilities if your reputation as an employer is comparable to that of a MAANG or another Fortune 500 tech company.



"In the age of social media, word travels fast and perception matters," said Bryan Adams, CEO and founder of Employer Branding & Talent Attraction Agency. "Modern job seekers weigh a prospective employer's reputation heavily in their decision to apply for a job or accept an offer, because they're keenly aware of the impact it will have on their own reputation and the way others perceive them."

Effective and consistent employer branding can also rebuild existing relationships with current staff and reduce a number of very important elements around recruitment. For example, it <u>cuts the</u> <u>cost per hire</u> by 50 percent and <u>turnover by 28 percent</u>.

However, in order to ensure turnover is reduced, the brand messaging that professionals see at a distance has to match up with the reality they experience up close. So in essence, don't over-promise and under-deliver when it comes to branding around what employees can expect at your business.



Many of the elements on which people base their career decisions are out of your control. Cultivating employer branding isn't. It's the only tangible advantage you have in today's wildly competitive environment and has to be an integral focus.

Bryan Adams

CEO & FOUNDER, Employer Branding and Talent Activation Agency

Examples of Effective Employer Branding Efforts.

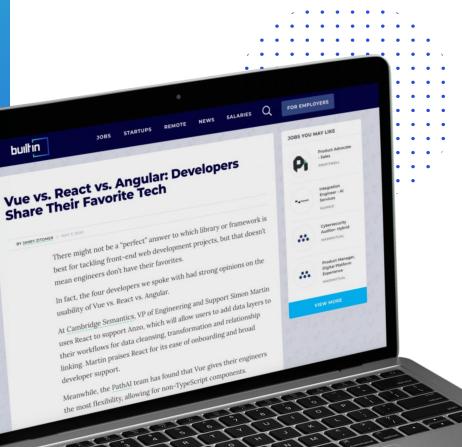
Building an EVP is vital to successful recruiting. So is pairing those efforts with engaging branding. But what does engaging branding look like? In this next section, we collected a number of examples of branding work from edtechs and other companies across tech. These examples are also rooted in many of the topics we mentioned in section one, as well as others that candidates value.

Example:

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 candidate with specialized technical skills would find interesting about a potential team. Diving into the nuances of the team's tech stack and how contributors use those tools offers candidates great insight into what they can expect if they join.



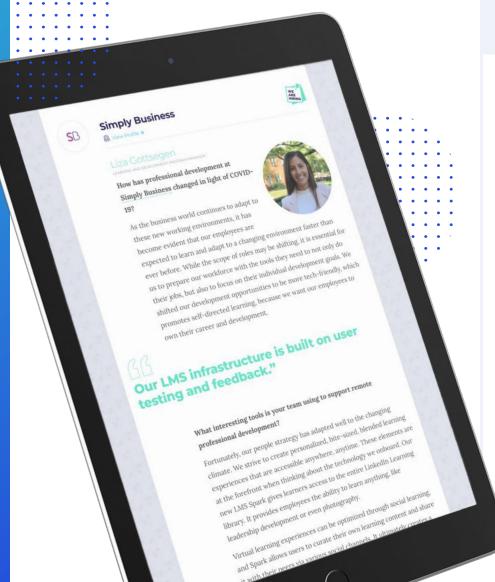
How You Can Recreate It:

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 tech infrastructure on the team and what it's being put toward.

Example:

How to Support Professional Development in a Digital Workplace.

Tech talent today across generally every speciality values professional development and there's no reason that career growth should suffer just because an employee is remote. This story breaks down how companies facilitate professional development in a remote environment, which is a very specific topic. Edtech companies that can produce a story with this level of specificity will ensure the many candidates who value remote work will know that their growth will still be valued even though they don't regularly come to the office.



How You Can Recreate It:

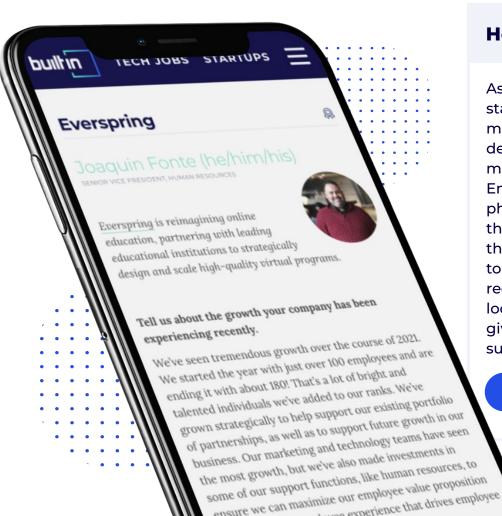
Think about your existing professional development initiatives. Then analyze them through the lens of your remote infrastructure. Can employees effectively get that development virtually? If so, highlight all the ways digital development is possible. Ask a member of the people team how the company approaches 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.

Example:

These Companies Are Sustaining Culture as They Scale.

This story touches on a number of elements that candidates find interesting: company growth, culture and mission. In this response from edtech company Everspring, the VP of HR contextualizes what the company's mission and values are and how those elements lay the foundation for an engaging culture. He then dives into how that foundation was maintained through the edtech's growth, what that scale looked like and what it means for employees.

Creating a detail-rich story like this can gi e candidates a lot of insight into your company growth, culture, values, tactics of engagement and more. All that transparency builds greater credibility to your business and increases engagement with potential hires.



How You Can Recreate It:

Ask an HR leader or another stakeholder that plays a role in maintaining company culture to describe how the culture is being maintained through growth. Encourage them to dive into the philosophies that dictate what that culture is before describing the tactics that uphold it. Also, try to organically discuss what your recent company growth has looked like within this context to give candidates a sense of the success of your business.



Example:

7 Women on Building a Culture of Recognition.

What better way to show candidates that your business looks out for women than by showing how female leaders pave the way for other women at the company. In this story, women leaders from seven LA tech companies discuss aspects of their career journeys that led them to the leadership space they're in today. From there, they share their philosophies and best practices on how to successfully empower the women around them.

Edtech companies that can offer this type of spotlight to women in their organizations will give candidates the sense that not only does the business support women in leadership, but those leaders are always looking out for the next generation.



How You Can Recreate It:

Identify women in leadership that would be open to discussing their career paths and leadership philosophies. Encourage these leaders to candidly share their stories. Then, ask them to show how they work to materialize their leadership methodologies through helpful action directed at women on their team or across the company. As a bonus, if your business offers initiatives that can benefit women, encourage your interviewees to organically mention those strategies as well.



Example:

How to Create an Engineering Culture That Attracts Top Talent.

Team culture is another important topic for many engineers. In fact, half of developers say a company's culture and office environment are their top priority when weighing job opportunities. And 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 directly 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 of what each team is like. Telling a story like this will give technical candidates clear visibility into how tech teams at your edtech function on the people-side of things.



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 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.

An Employer Branding Checklist +Worksheet.

As an edtech company, investing in an employer branding strategy is absolutely worthwhile, but the execution doesn't happen overnight. Effective content often involves a number of stakeholders, an editing process, and a number of other complex components. But fear not — we built a playbook that outlines these components from ideation to execution.

Intro to Employer 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. 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. 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 edtech 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.

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



What's the goal of the content? The employer branding content asset.	ink about the central reason you're investing in this
☐ Boost brand awareness	☐ Increase social media following
Doost brand awareness	increase social integral following
Improve reputation as a tech company	Other
☐ Improve applicant traffic	
to send. Each content asset should largely fo	t? Identify the key message you want this content cus on one message. Examples of a thesis include: e how engineering team uses certain dev tools,
Thesis:	
examples might be: engineering team leads, div	
-	Ire in this content? The chosen team should and audience the best. Multiple teams can be be interviewee list is not too lengthy.
Engineering	□ UX
☐ Data	☐ Design
□ QA	☐ Business development
■ Marketing	☐ Sales
☐ Finance	☐ HR
□ Product	Other

EMPLOYER BRANDING WORKSHEET

Create Content



Interview Details	
Interviewee 1 name & title:	
Interviewee 2 name & title:	
Interviewee 3 name & title:	
Interviewer:	
Interview location:	
In person Location:	
☐ Video/remote	
Email/written Deadline for responses	
Interviewee date:	
Will a photo or video shoot be necessary? Y/N	1
Photo/video shoot date:	<u> </u>
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	Press release
☐ Newsletter	☐ Video
☐ Webinar	Social media (list platforms below)
☐ Third-party platform (list platforms below)	Other
Social media platforms where content will live: _	
Third-party platforms where content will live:	

Create Content



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

Sample 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



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	Highlight during company meeting
Promote article in email signature	Other
Staff to share on their personal feeds	
Social media (list platforms)	_/
External promotions:	
☐ Email newsletter	Sponsored emails
☐ Display ads	☐ Youtube/ video ads
■ Events	Other
Paid social media (list platforms)	/
Organic social media (list platforms)	/
What design elements will be needed	d?
Digital ad imagery	☐ Email signature image
Paid social ad imagery	☐ Imagery for content pieces
Organic social imagery	Other

Conclusion.

The growth of both an industry as a whole and the companies within it isn't possible without humans powering that scale. Edtech has been in a digital gold rush for the last two years and now, employers in the space need to hire and retain the talent necessary to support sustained expansion. And in order to meet those very important needs, edtech companies need to ensure that professionals feel fulfilled and engaged during that growth.

Step one of this process is knowing what talent wants from their employers. When edtechs know these insights, they can start implementing them. But it isn't enough to simply adopt strategies like sabbaticals, DEI training programs and an efficient remote culture — edtechs need to showcase these investments. And employer branding is the best way for these businesses to get the word out.

When an undeniable EVP is paired with a well-constructed branding strategy, the sky is the limit for edtech companies hoping to stand out with candidates among both MAANG companies and other edtech competition.



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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