



Build and Maintain an Employer Brand in *Uncertain* Times.

Why it's Vital to Keep Telling
Your Story Through Uncertainty

#FINDYOURFORWARD

Introduction.

There's no business that's immune to the occasional bout of turbulence. Whether it be an unforeseen event that disrupts business operations worldwide, stock market volatility or simply lower-than-expected revenue for a few quarters; every company is susceptible to temporary periods of uncertainty.

But companies have to keep a firm grip on the elements they can control during these moments — and their employer brand is one of the most vital.

Maintaining a consistent employer branding strategy during any low point in the rhythm of the market helps in many ways:

- **Companies can shape the narrative about their operations** rather than letting silence or outside forces tell those stories in a potentially negative light.
- **It builds confidence with existing employees** that the business is not in a free-fall, which aids retention efforts.
- **Employers are able to stay top-of-mind with potential candidates**, which builds greater brand awareness over time.

If your branding efforts stop during periods of uncertainty, you could miss out on these opportunities and let competitors take your market share of talent and revenue. In fact, 27 percent of the 1,099 tech professionals we surveyed in March 2022 said an employer's brand is the most important to them in their job search — more important than the company's tech stack or DEI efforts.

In this guide, we discuss a few of the most impactful ways to highlight your employer brand during a period of uncertainty. We also offer examples of what these branding efforts look like in practice and provide tips on how you can build your own turbulence-proof branding strategy.

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SECTION 1

Why Storytelling Matters.

No good narrative is complete without a bit of tension or a heroic rise through a difficult situation. As such, businesses shouldn't stop telling their brand story simply because they've hit an unexpected roadblock along their journey. Because if you aren't telling your story, even through the difficult moments, who is?

In this section, we explore the many nuances of why consistent storytelling — especially during times of uncertainty — is so important for employers.

SECTION 1

Don't Let Others Tell Your Story.

Storytelling has been around since the dawn of civilization and our brains are actually hardwired to connect with stories. **Stories are actually 22 times more memorable than facts**. So while it may be a fact that your business could be in a moment of storminess, the stories you tell will be what candidates, employees and customers remember.

Telling a compelling employer brand story will help you continuously attract great talent. **Not only do 75 percent of candidates evaluate an employer's brand before applying to an open role, but an engaging employer brand can improve the quality of your applicant pool by 54 percent**.

While uncertain times can often mean hiring slows down or stops for affected employers, branding must remain to keep visibility with potential candidates high long-term — making it easier to attract talent when hiring resumes. Don't let the talent market forget about you.

Branding-focused stories also resonate with your people internally and affect retention, which can save you money in the long run. Organizations with a strong employer brand benefit from a 43 percent reduction in hiring costs. Turnover can also be reduced by 28 percent with a solid employer branding infrastructure. In Uncertain Times when budgets are tight, every dollar counts and employer branding is a smart investment in your team's future.



75%

of candidates **evaluate an employer's brand** before applying to a job.



SECTION 1

The important thing to remember is that storytelling happens naturally — if you're not working to intentionally manage your employer brand, job seekers as well as current and former employees could create their own narrative; and some of these parties might not have great things to say.

Radio silence, even in the most trying times, is not recommended, especially if your business invested in branding efforts before or has a reputation of being vocal. It can send the impression that the business is in worse shape than it is and motivate employees to jump ship or competitors to take advantage of your perceived weakness.

When your company is up against challenges, storytelling is the investment you need to highlight your employer brand in the best light. It's also a way to show the world that your business is resilient to outside market forces and your employees are adaptable to change and adversity.

“If you don’t give the market the story to talk about, they’ll define your brand’s story for you,”

- David Brier, author and employer-branding thought leader

SECTION 2

How Tell Your Employer Brand Story + Examples.

When seas start to get rough, your priorities as a business shift and so should your company's story. The messaging that attracted candidates prior to a critical situation may not hold up in uncertain times. You must find a new way to tell your story.

To help, we've laid out a few strategies you can use to successfully showcase your employer brand during times of change or ambiguity. We also feature examples of what successful branding efforts look like across a wide variety of topics that job seekers find important.

SECTION 2

Tell Your Story Through Your People.

Who better to tell your story than the ones who live it every day? Your team members are the best indicator of what life at your company is like and they're exactly who prospective employees want to hear from.

Having employees tell your company story gives you the chance to build trust with candidates. **A majority of job seekers (66 percent) believe that interacting with current employees is the best way to get a sense of a potential employer.** So your employees are an invaluable part of your story and employer brand. And allowing current staff to tell your brand story builds a more authentic connection with candidates and helps get your message in front of more people.

Not only do job seekers relate to your employees, they also pay more attention to what they have to say. If you want to amplify your company story to the masses, empower your employees to distribute your message. Why? **Messaging shared by employees receives 561 percent more impressions than when a company sends it.** Content also gets shared 24 times more when distributed by employees.

The result of employees telling your company story is much wider and more impactful than what your company could ever do on its own. Employees are not only your biggest asset on the front lines during unpredictable times but they are also pivotal in keeping your employer brand top of mind among active job seekers and passive candidates.

SECTION 2

However, using employee voices to tell your brand story during a market lull does not mean asking staff members to talk about the temporary hardships the team is facing. You can use employee-driven branding efforts to tell stories that candidates care about but that aren't necessarily tied to any turbulence or success your business is seeing. For example, instead of talking about attributes that make employees successful at your company, focus on a key initiative that was recently launched like a new product.

Share Stories Candidates Want To Hear.

Company culture is a huge component of your employer brand. So much so that it actually outranks the desire for remote work in a candidate's job search: **40 percent of the 1,099 tech professionals we surveyed alongside Brandata said they prioritize company culture above all else in their job search.** By allowing members of your team to detail the elements of your culture that make it unique, exciting and/or empowering, you offer professionals a peek at day-to-day life in the business.

We also found that one in two (53 percent) candidates prioritize opportunities for professional growth and development in their job search. Employee growth should be taking place regardless of market influences on the business, so employers have a great opportunity to tell a branding story driven by this very important topic.



24x

**content gets shared
24 times more** when
distributed by employees.



SECTION 2

In a final example, **employers can use their tech stack or technical best practices as the basis for branded content.** Websites, software, APIs and other digital implementations still need to be built and serviced during trying times. **Our Brandata survey found that 20 percent of engineers and data professionals value tech stack above all else in their job search.** And with the tech unemployment rate under 2 percent — and technical roles being some of the most difficult to fill — employers should generally always be appealing to skilled technical experts as best they can.

Employers can showcase the tools and processes their tech teams use to both up their brand awareness during moments of slower business and passively appeal to technical experts.



Check out examples of branded content geared toward company culture, professional development and tech tools on the next few pages.

SECTION 2

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.

Employers that 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.

[READ THE STORY HERE](#)



SECTION 2

Example:

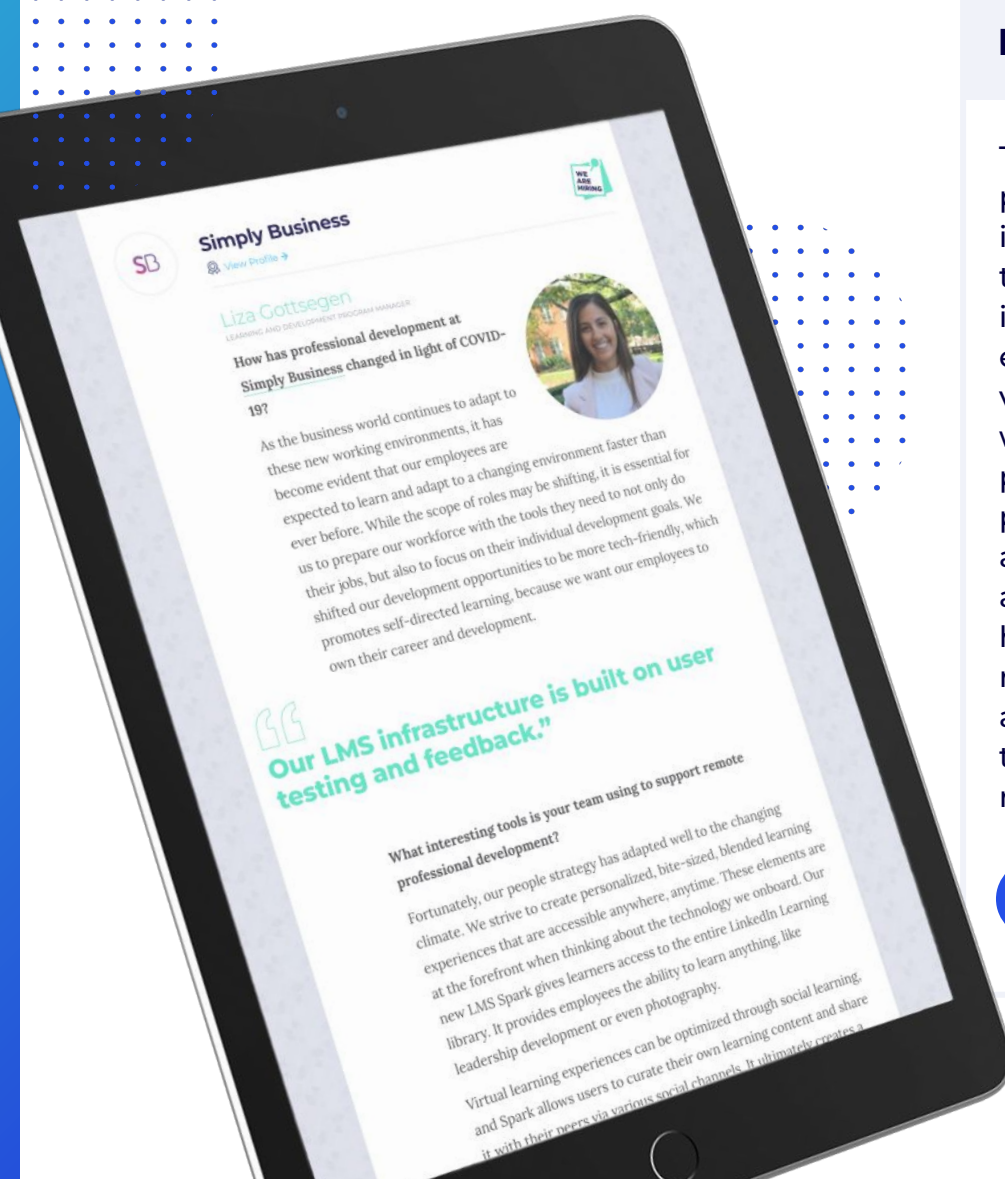
How to Support Professional Development in a Digital Workplace.

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. Companies that 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.

[READ THE STORY HERE](#)



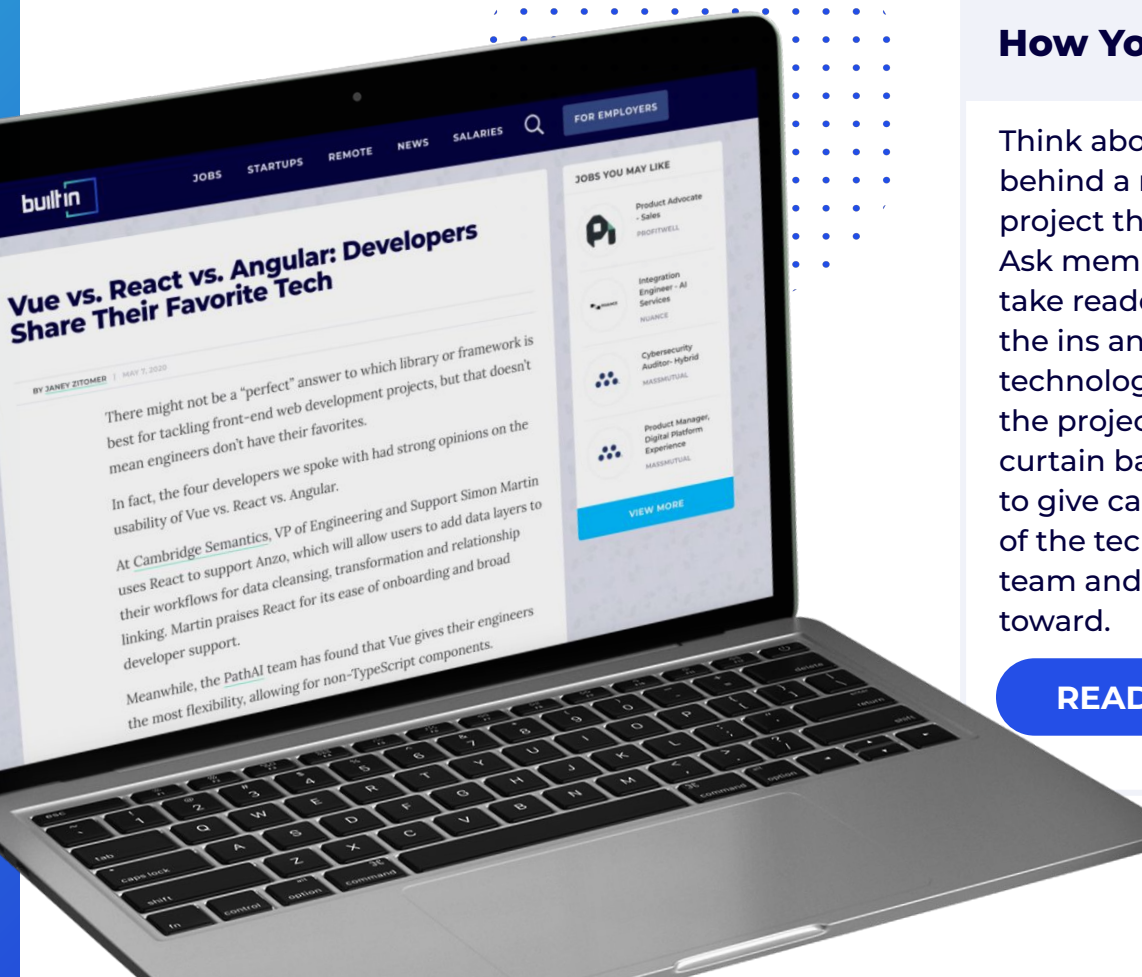
SECTION 2

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 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.

[READ THE STORY HERE](#)

SECTION 2

It's Not About Your Services, But How You Serve.

When a little uncertainty hits a specific company, an industry or the economy at large, it's important to remember that it's not always about the profits and losses. **Of course tech professionals today want to work a company that's doing well, but they also place a very high value on companies that share their values.** Additionally, many also prioritize working at employers with missions and company cultures worth supporting.

So during tough times, companies should double down on their efforts to highlight the noteworthy elements of their values and mission to keep current staff engaged and the general public (including potential new hires) interested in the more human elements of the business.

Companies that stand for something benefit a great deal during more unpredictable moments inside and outside the business world. For example,, 59 percent of candidates are attracted to a company because of its mission. When employers invest in detailing the “why” and “how” behind how that mission is fulfilled, they remind the world of why they got started in the first place. **Your mission remains intact during the ebbs and flows that are normal for any business. Doubling down on that mission can help existing employees see the long-term goals and continue to push through.**

These stories also detail the ongoing need for the products and services the business offers, which can be an effective way to assure audiences that your company is capable of weathering a storm or two.

“

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 CEO

General Electric

SECTION 2

The general public understands that profits will always be top of mind for businesses, but they feel companies can still make a difference. Survey results show **73 percent of people feel companies can find ways to positively impact its community while also increasing revenue.** Lending a hand helps move the needle, as well as resonates with prospects: 85 percent of employees say corporate citizenship is an important employer criterion.

Even if your business isn't rooted in a market driven by altruism, like greentech or social impact, there are still plenty of ways to show your commitment to corporate citizenship. Highlight the volunteer work or donations your teams facilitate. Showcase the dedication your team members show to impactful causes and detail how the business supports them in those efforts. There are plenty of opportunities for employers to lean into the idea that they're supporting the greater good. Telling those stories is a great way to maintain employee and candidate engagement during business turbulence of any kind. Show the world that a little uncertainty won't stop your business's commitment to helping others, either nationally or locally.

85%

of employees say corporation's citizenship is an important consideration when assessing employers.

SECTION 2

Values Speak Volumes.

Core values — the underlying principles that dictate a company's culture and attitudes — play huge role in hiring and retention today. **Around 60 percent of U.S. employees today weight working at employers based on whether the business' values and beliefs match their own.** And while many elements of a business can change during a period of uncertainty, its core values should not only remain whole but be reinforced.

Employers can use storytelling to share the nuances of their core values, how they shape the culture and the team's work. They can also highlight how those values are upheld no matter the circumstances affecting the business. Branding stories around this topic, when told effectively, can pull the heartstrings of the large population of candidates that closely evaluate an employer's values before joining, or even forming an opinion of them.



Check out these examples of branded content geared toward spotlighting core values on the following pages.

SECTION 2

Example:

The Real Impact Values Make on a Tech Company and Its Employees.

In this story, eight executive leaders across numerous industries detail the ins and outs of their company mission and their values. Each outlines: what their missions and values are, how they were conjured, how they're lived out by the team and how these elements support the team's quest for success.

"Help hardworking people get access to fast, trustworthy credit" and "Drive down the cost of higher education through better technology and processes" are just a few mission statements featured in the piece. And with transparency into how these company visions are lived out, candidates (especially those that are mission-driven) can get a sense of the impactful work they'll be contributing to if they join.

How You Can Recreate It:

Do a deep dive into the significance of your company values and vision. If possible, ask a founder or a team member that's been at the company for a while to briefly explain the history behind the company's values. Then — just as in the story above — encourage the interviewee to outline how the team embodies these values regularly and how the vision pushes the team to accomplish goals.

[READ THE STORY HERE](#)



SECTION 2

Example:

Is Your Company Mission Corny? 3 Leaders on Creating a Real Sense of Purpose.

By answering questions like, “What aspect of your company culture or values most reflects the company mission?” and “What role do your team members play in building, strengthening or celebrating your company mission?” employers in this piece can dive head-first into the core-value-driven narratives that tech pros enjoy reading. Candidates can get a clear sense of two very important elements from these responses: what the missions and values are that drive the cultures and work at these companies do; and how their input as employees influences the mission and its impact.

A story like this can re-engage current employees and prospective ones during even the most unpredictable of times.

How You Can Recreate It:

Ask a leader at the company who’s very familiar with the company’s mission, core values and what influences them to be an interviewee. From there, ask them questions similar to those in the piece about what how the culture and the company’s output is influenced by those elements — and how those elements are influenced by the employees.

[READ THE STORY HERE](#)



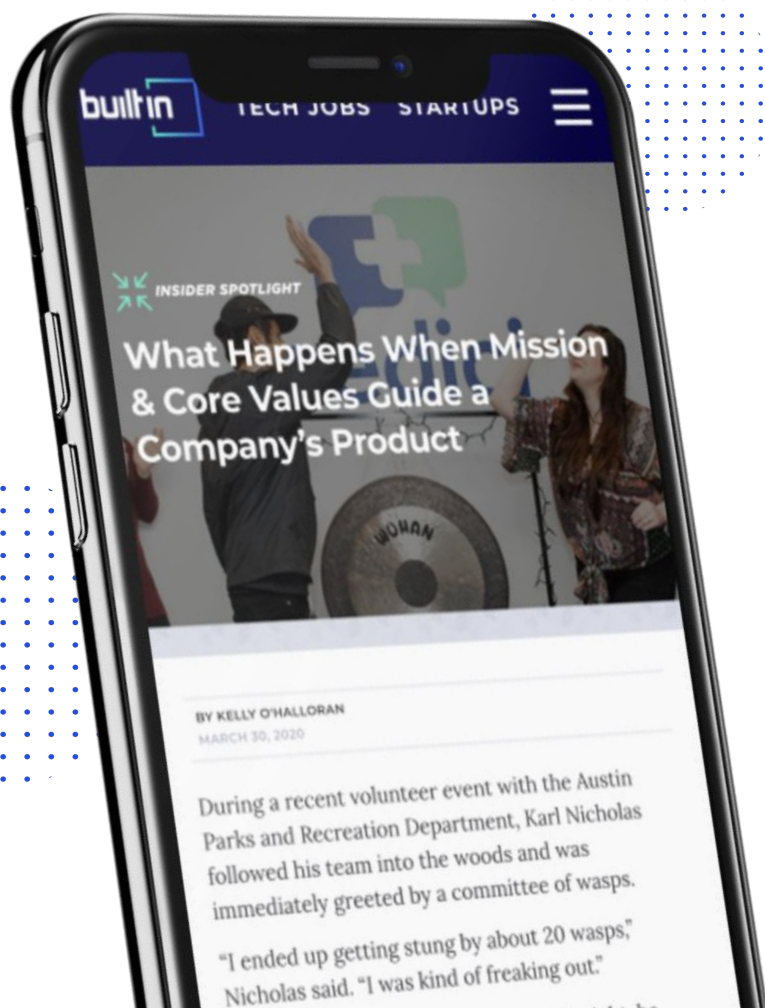
SECTION 2

Example:

What Happens When Mission & Core Values Guide a Company's Product.

This piece dives how one healthtech company's core values — caring, ambitious, resourceful, excellent and speedy — and mission influence how team members build the product. Interviewees explore how each value can have an effect on what someone is working on, whether they be in sales or UX.

The story gets in the weeds about the huge impact the mission and core values have on the company's output. A story like this is an effective way to: give candidates a sense of how their work might be intertwined with values they support; re-engage current employees around the value-driven work they're supporting; and remind the world of what inspires the product's structure.



How You Can Recreate It:

Seek employees across a few different departments that have been with the company for a few years (they're most familiar with the mission and values.)

Encourage them to speak on how they interpret the mission and values and how those elements influence their work. Ask them to share recent examples of how their work was impacted by these core elements.

[READ THE STORY HERE](#)

SECTION 2

Tell Your Story Through the Right Platforms.

Candidates' behavior changes all the time. So the platforms you traditionally rely on to promote your messages may no longer be as effective after a certain period of time. You must quickly and continuously adapt your promotion strategies to keep your employer brand in front of job seekers.

Understanding which platforms people flock to and why will be influential in making sure your story is heard. Identify which platforms are worth your continued investment and which you can pull back on. Then, begin seeking out the platforms you've yet to tap into, or adjust your strategies on platforms you already post to.

Branding efforts to retain engagement during a rough patch may be all for nothing if you aren't reaching your target audiences effectively.



SECTION 3

4 Things To Remember When Promoting Your Employer Brand.

By now you should be familiar with some of the proven ways to highlight your employer brand during a market fluctuation or uncertain time. It's no doubt that time is of the essence during these moments, so to help you take action faster and yield better outcomes, we compiled a quick list of key directives to keep top of mind as you craft your story.

SECTION 3

#1 Be Transparent and Proactive.

Let tech professionals — both inside and outside the business — know some of the more important elements they should be aware of. People want to know things like: what your company's hiring plans are (or if they're frozen for a time), what your diversity metrics and initiatives are and how employees are being supported following major news events like the overturn of Roe v. Wade. Candidates and employees alike agree that being transparent, even if the information isn't ideal, is better than making excuses or staying silent.

#2 Be Authentic But Stay In Your Lane.

When responding to major events get proactive about your response and how you publicize your stance. But be sure that your responses come from a place of authenticity.

Our research found that an average of 32 percent of employees who identify as non-white, women, LGBTQIA+ and having a disability **disagree** that their employer is authentic when facilitating external communications around DEI efforts and socially-conscious topics. Candidates are more critical of disingenuous statements from private companies than ever. **So don't let a desire to "be part of the conversation" make you look like you're fishing for relevance.**

Additionally, don't inject your company's voice where it's not needed. Let the experts guide the conversation and contribute only when you have value to add or support to offer. Do not speak simply to be heard.

SECTION 3

#3 Be Willing to Add Some Levity.

In times marked by anxiety inside or outside your business, a little lightheartedness can go a long way. People often seek bright spots during these periods and many will appreciate the breath of fresh air that levity offers. When appropriate and applicable, don't be afraid to infuse a little humor or fun into your employer brand story.

Doing so provides a glimpse of your company culture and offers a much-needed respite from the challenges at hand. And there's a reason behind that — laughter has been linked to tangible short- and long-term benefits including alleviating stress responses and improving immune system strength.

#4 Leverage Your Leaders.

Leverage your leaders during tough times. When the ship is headed toward uncharted waters, people want to hear from the captain. Senior members of your board and C-suite leaders are concerned with the long-term health of your business, its relationship with the surrounding community and, most of all, your employees. Encourage them to speak up and show up when it matters most in times of uncertainty. A message from your CEO or a trusted, high-ranking member of leadership will help win over the hearts of not only your staff but job seekers outside the company.

SECTION 4

Give Branding a Shot With These Worksheets.

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 no matter what the market conditions are.

SECTION 4

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 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.

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

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boost brand awareness | <input type="checkbox"/> Increase social media following |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improve reputation as a tech company | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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 represented in the same asset so long as the interviewee list is not too lengthy.*

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> UX |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Data | <input type="checkbox"/> Design |
| <input type="checkbox"/> QA | <input type="checkbox"/> Business development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing | <input type="checkbox"/> Sales |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finance | <input type="checkbox"/> HR |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Product | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

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

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

☐ 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: _____ / _____ /
_____ / _____ / _____ /

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 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:

- [illegible]

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:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internal newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Highlight during company meeting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Promote article in email signature | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staff to share on their personal feeds | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social media (list platforms) _____ / _____ / _____ | |

External promotions:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Email newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsored emails |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Display ads | <input type="checkbox"/> Youtube/ video ads |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Events | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paid social media (list platforms) _____ / _____ / _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organic social media (list platforms) _____ / _____ / _____ | |

What design elements will be needed?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Digital ad imagery | <input type="checkbox"/> Email signature image |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paid social ad imagery | <input type="checkbox"/> Imagery for content pieces |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organic social imagery | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Conclusion.

Global challenges arise and dissipate. Markets ebb and flows. Every company experiences wins and unexpected setbacks from external forces of all kinds; it's part of the natural cycle of business. What companies need to remember throughout this cycle is that maintaining a healthy employer brand is just as important during the high points as it is during the lows (and arguably more.)

No one will tell your brand story for you. So storytelling and transparency during these rough points eliminates the possibility of outside forces dictating your brand for you. It helps remind employees that it's not time to jump ship and that even though seas may be a little rough, there are plenty of reasons to stay on board. Branding in these moments also continues your investment in your reputation in the long run, which will make talent acquisition easier when things normalize.

For businesses in today's hyper-competitive talent market, brand awareness is vital no matter what forces are dictating corporate scale or slow downs. And the employers that have plans in place to navigate branding throughout every positive and negative change in the market will be poised to see the greatest success in the long-term.



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.

CONTACT US