



Recruitment is Now *Marketing*:

The Critical Shift From Sourcing to Employer Branding



Introduction.

Candidates now behave like consumers, and as a result, there has been a significant shift in the recruitment industry from traditional recruitment to recruitment marketing. Employers must understand this to attract and convert the best candidates for their open positions. Traditional recruitment methods are no longer enough, which means employers need to start making changes to keep up with current trends to attract, engage and nurture talent before they apply to a job.

In this guide, we share key findings and data from both organizational leaders and candidates nationwide about the challenges of recruiting and what candidates seek and care about most. Learn why shifting from sourcing to employer branding is necessary and how an external employer brand is a must-have in hiring the qualified tech talent you need. Discover actionable steps and strategic approaches you can take to become the marketer necessary to boost your tech recruiting strategy.

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SECTION 1

The Candidate's Journey Has Changed.

To move forward with positive results, it's helpful to understand how the recruitment industry got to where it is today. At what point did candidates start to behave like consumers?

SECTION 1

The Recruitment Marketing Era

Every 10 to 15 years, the recruitment industry sees a material shift in candidate behavior. First was the job board era, where candidates found a job ad and clicked to apply. Then, we moved into the sourcing era, where candidates started applying by responding to LinkedIn InMails or emails from recruiters.

Now, we are in the recruitment marketing era. With the proliferation of social media and influencer branding, candidates seek out employers the way they shop for brands, purchase products or book vacations and restaurant reservations. A candidate's journey is not just impacted by one channel — it's impacted by many. Before choosing an employer to work for, candidates refer to multiple channels, including online resources, reviews, social media, information from others and an employer's website.

To truly invest in the right channels to influence future employment decisions, employers must be everywhere their target audience is and measure their brand across all channels to understand what is working in terms of their brand spend.



SECTION 2

The Industry is Beginning to Recognize the Shift to Marketing.

The good news is that the tech industry is recognizing the shift and adjusting its talent acquisition strategies. In partnership with Brandata, Built In surveyed more than 1,000 talent leaders to understand their best practices for hiring sought-after tech talent.

SECTION 2

The [results showed](#) that online tech-specific platforms and employer branding ranked as the top two recruitment channels that are working, with a clear shift away from sourcing, which fell down to seventh on the list. Social media came in third, with referrals, third-party job platforms and events ranking in the next three spots, respectively.

Q: Rank the following recruitment channels in order of effectiveness for recruiting qualified tech talent for your organization in 2024.



* Based on Built In x Brandata survey of 1,089 talent industry leaders

That's not to say that sourcing can't still make an impact. It could even be the best option for specific roles, such as HR professionals, recruiters or salespeople, who are on LinkedIn daily.

However, if you're not where your tech candidates are daily and you don't make yourself known as a potential employer throughout the year, you'll lose out on top tech candidates when they are ready to make the move and actively looking.



SECTION 3

The Biggest Branding Challenges for Employers.

What are the biggest challenges employers face in today's marketing-focused world of recruitment?

SECTION 3

Effectively Targeting & Engaging the Right Audience

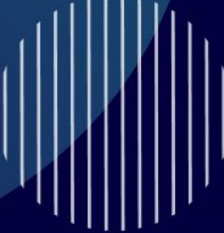
Our research shows that effectively targeting and engaging the right audience comes in at the top of the list as the biggest challenge, with creating the right messaging to attract talent coming in second. Not too far behind are navigating budget and resource constraints and measuring the return on investment of employer branding initiatives.

Q: What are the biggest employer branding challenges your organization faces in 2024?

Targeting & engaging the right audience effectively	43.8%
Creating the right messaging to attract talent	37.6%
Navigating budget & resource constraints	32.3%
Measuring the ROI of employer branding initiatives	29.2%

* Based on Built In x Brandata survey of 1,089 talent industry leaders

Together, these categories cover the entire marketing funnel, transforming recruitment into marketing.



SECTION 4

Addressing the Challenges.

You now know what the biggest branding challenges are, but how do you begin to address them?

SECTION 4

First, understand the candidate's journey when searching for jobs and adjust your recruiting strategies accordingly.

Candidates research and shop for jobs in a way similar to how they search for brands. Throughout one's career, candidates go through this continuous cycle:

**Candidates
research + shop for
jobs the way they
shop for brands.**



Candidate Awareness

First, candidates must be aware you exist as an employer. You must be on the same platforms.

The candidate's journey is continuously happening and even begins before the candidate decides to change jobs. Awareness of employers is building for candidates through the sites they visit, content they read, ads they see, conversations they have with peers and colleagues and so on.

SECTION 4

Increasing Candidate Interest

After the awareness build-up, candidates will read about your company and will research your perks, benefits, culture, tech, mission and more.

Candidate Evaluation and Commitment

Finally, a candidate will evaluate your jobs and potentially commit by applying.

The journey for how they commit will look different for each candidate, and that's OK. For example, they might evaluate you on Built In, then go to LinkedIn to see if they have any connections and then ultimately apply directly through your careers site.



SECTION 5

Applying Marketing Strategies to Recruit Top-Tier Candidates.

Talent acquisition and employment branding teams are tasked with learning how to recruit candidates the same way marketers drive demand for brands.

SECTION 5

The steps necessary to market to candidates include:

1. Know your target market and ideal customer profile and build awareness by advertising where they spend time.
2. Gain interest from your target audience by helping them evaluate you based on what they care most about.
3. Be prepared to measure ROI using multi touch attribution.

This is not an easy transition and will require rethinking how you recruit today. Below, we will break down a step-by-step guide for how you can begin to act like a marketer.

Step #1: Know Your Target Market + ICP

One of the most essential elements of a marketer's playbook is to invest time and resources in the right places. Understanding where your ideal audience spends their time is critical to seeing conversion success. This does not mean building content for your careers site and assuming candidates are coming there proactively. Instead, you must focus on actively driving traffic to your careers site.

To drive traffic, recruiters must have a brand that is "always on" in all the places their ideal candidates are searching for employers or jobs. When you're where they are with a brand that's "always on," you're much more likely to impact your ideal candidate's decision to apply to your roles, but they won't be able to find you without this critical piece.

SECTION 5

It's essential to remember that, even when you're not hiring or hiring has slowed, you want to be on the top of sought-after candidates' minds. Once a top candidate is actively on the market, they are only available for an average of [10 days](#). Fortunately, having a proactive employer brand strategy and “always on” brand keeps your organization at the top of their mind when candidates actively start looking.

When you think about it, hotels, restaurants and airlines don't turn their brand spend on and off — yet travel is seasonal just like hiring — and neither should you. Instead, these services continuously put their brand out there to influence purchasing decisions. You must have a brand that is “always on” and available when your target market is doing advanced research so your organization comes to mind when the time comes for them to search for a new job.

If you wait until you're actively hiring to create your brand, you'll miss up to 70 percent of the applicants' search process. By being proactive and building a brand now, you'll have a strong brand that pulls in top talent by the time you're ready to hire your next top employee.



55% of tech candidates primarily use Google search when researching jobs.

Similar to how people use Google search to book their family vacations, 55 percent of tech candidates use Google search when researching new jobs. This is where they begin to do deeper research about potential employers, assess whether a company is a good fit for them and ultimately decide whether they want to pursue working for an organization. This research journey will continue across many different channels, each impacting the candidate's decision of whether to pursue working for the employer.

SECTION 5

Remember, you're not booking the first hotel you find while booking a vacation. Likewise, candidates aren't applying for the first job they see, either. They will make an informed decision about who they want to work for next. As a result, candidate behavior must drive your strategy, or you risk being ineffective with a costly outcome.

The need to build awareness becomes critical when we look at candidate survey data, as well. Without brand awareness, finding and hiring top talent becomes extremely difficult and costly. [Built In's recent survey of over 1,300 tech professionals](#) confirmed that 43 percent will only respond to a recruiter after some consideration. Additionally, a recent Ashby report corroborated the discrepancy between where talent acquisition teams spend the majority of their sourcing time compared to the ROI — tech professionals have the lowest response rates for roles through sourcing efforts. Therefore, recruiters need to stop wasting their time on outdated modes of recruiting.

To be successful, you must take a targeted approach based on the roles you need to fill. Programmatic and large-volume sites will help for your lower-level, high-volume roles. However, when targeting the hardest-to-find tech professionals and highly skilled workers, you must spend money where they spend time. You might find sales, HR and marketers on LinkedIn daily, but that's not the case with tech professionals — you will not see them on LinkedIn until they are actively seeking.

Think about it this way: If you are a five-star hotel trying to reach the top 5 percent of people who can economically afford you, your target demographic is not finding you on Expedia and booking a \$1,500-a-night room. Brands raise awareness with the top 5 percent of people by consistently engaging those buyers through avenues like influencers, luxury travel publications and aligned interests, reaching them consistently by branding themselves where those people are consistently online.

SECTION 5

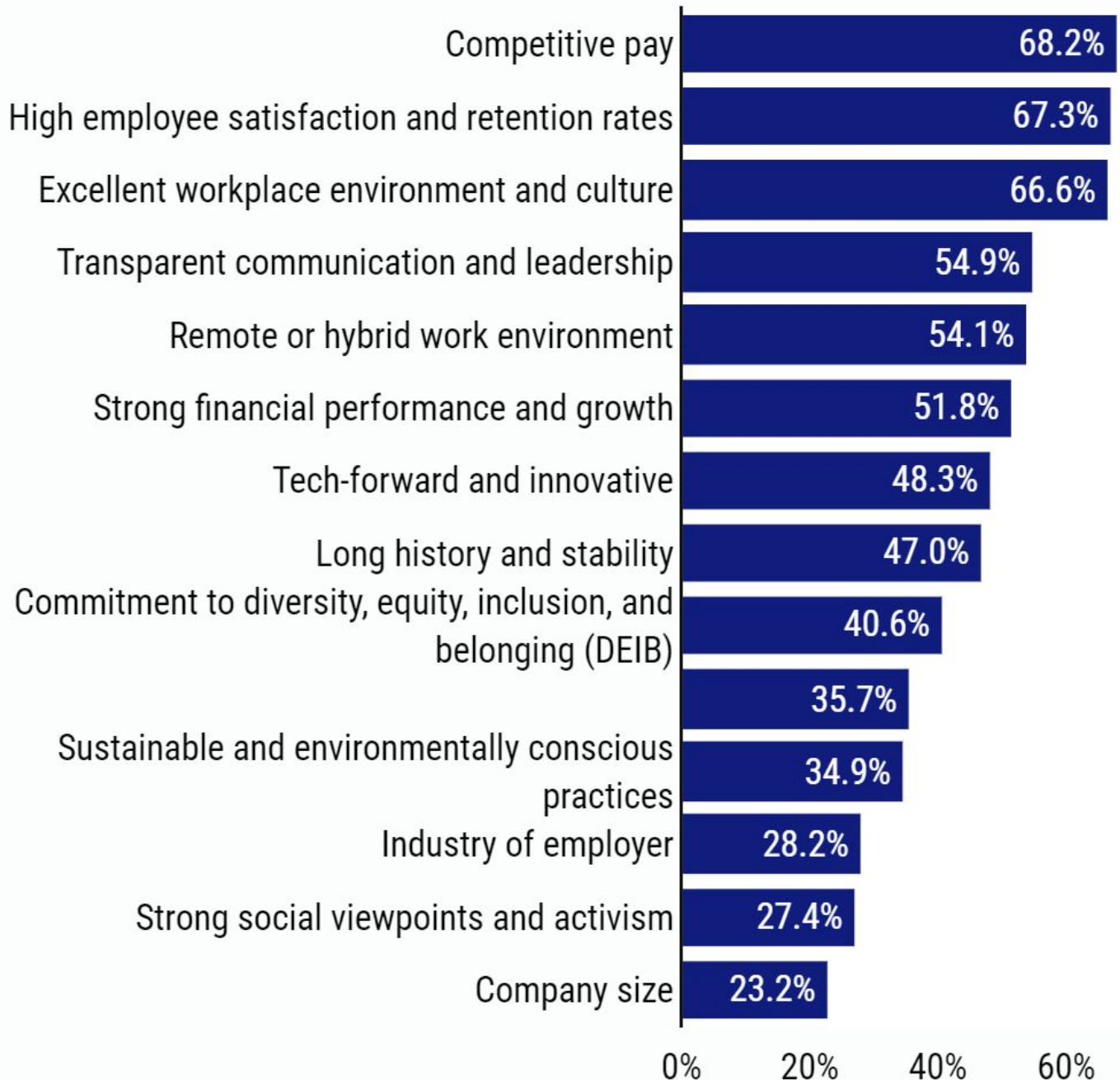
Step #2: Gain Interest From Your Target Audience

Now that you understand where to find your ideal audience and advertise your brand, it's time to tackle how to generate their interest. How do you accomplish this task? By speaking to what candidates care about most.

[Results from our survey of more than 1,300 tech professionals](#) show that competitive pay, high employee satisfaction and retention rates, and an excellent workplace environment and culture are the keys to influencing their decisions about where they want to work. Transparent communication and leadership, remote or hybrid work environments and strong financial performance and growth are close behind.

You want to lean into messaging that hits these key points when placing your brand across the most impactful channels. Doing so gives you a much better chance of gaining interest from your ideal candidates and, ultimately, influencing their decision to apply.

What Matters Most to Candidates?



* Based on Built In x Brandata survey of 1,300+ candidates

SECTION 5

Step #3: Be Prepared to Measure ROI Using Multi Touch Attribution

The final key piece of the marketing playbook is measuring ROI after conversion.

Talent leaders and recruiters are often asked to act like marketers — and ultimately, they need to — yet they don't generally have a marketing background or budget to do so. This means they face the difficult task of recruiting like marketers without marketers' tools to successfully measure ROI.

Marketers have spent years experimenting and building robust attribution models to measure critical impact points of what leads a buyer to their decision. The talent industry has some catching up to do. However, there are some tools recruiters can use to measure the impact of their recruitment marketing efforts.

Know where candidates are researching you and collect the data



If you keep reporting on data solely based on sources candidates applied from, you will likely invest only in sourcing and your career site, and this places your company at an extreme disadvantage.

Marketing teams need a budget to drive awareness to their demo request forms, and so do you. Candidates don't just show up to your career site or just apply to your jobs because they're posted. You must build awareness with candidates, gain their interest and convert them. Focusing more energy on measuring the first three stages of your funnel will lead to higher ROI in the long term.

SECTION 5

Case Study: The Candidate Journey

If you're not yet convinced, here's a real example of an in-demand software engineer's journey to landing their ideal job.

You can see that Jonathan had 14 distinct touch points on Built In over more than a month, which influenced his decision to apply for the job. However, you'll notice that the ATS lists the source of the hire as the company's careers site.



Jonathon M.

Software Engineer // San Fran., CA

- **Day 1:**
Viewed profile, Viewed jobs, Clicked 'Apply Now'
- **2 Weeks later:**
Viewed profile & jobs
- **1 Day Later:**
Viewed article, profile, & jobs on Built In
- **1 Day Later:**
Viewed profile on Built In
- **2 Weeks Later:**
Viewed article + Profile on Built In →
- **1 Day Later:**
Viewed job on Built In →
- **3 Days Later:**
Viewed job on Built In →
- **1 Week Later:**
Viewed job on Built In →
- **2 Months Later: STATUS = HIRED**



Jonathon M.

Software Engineer // San Fran., CA

X Company

Status: **Offer Accepted**

Source of Hire: **CAREER SITE**



* Based on Built In Data + Greenhouse ATS



SECTION 6

Tips for Tracking Attribution.

As the recruiter for this job, how do you know what influenced Jonathan to apply? Do you just give credit to your careers site? No.

SECTION 6

Talent leaders can track the success of employer brand campaigns in many ways. To understand the effectiveness of reaching the right audience, you can track leading indicators of success, like campaign impressions and engagement. This ensures you are reaching the right talent with your efforts.

From there, using tools like Google Analytics or Pixel Tracking can help identify the application's referral source. Combining this with ATS source reports will help you get a better sense of the full candidate journey.

In addition, tracking the quality of the audience you are reaching is one of the most important ways to gauge the effectiveness of your channels. You can do this through reports from your partners on who their audience is and how your applicants from each source are progressing through your recruitment funnel, assuming you review all applicants.

Finally, you can include questions within the application like, "How did you hear about us?" or "What platforms did you use to research our company?" You can also consider asking this in a survey to candidates sent after the hiring process is complete.

These metrics combined will help you better understand the full impact of your employer brand's ROI which is critical to ensuring your budget is properly reviewed and approved for what is needed.

Tips for Tracking Attribution.

Multi-Touch
Through Pixel
Tracking

Overall
Traffic +
Engagement
Data

Conversion
Tracking w/
Google
Analytics

Quality of
Audience +
Applicants

Candidate
Surveys or
NPS

SECTION 6

Brand Spend vs Employer Brand Spend

16X+ Marketing budgets tend to be 16x+ the budgets recruitment marketing teams have

* Based on Gartner Data

Ultimately, if you want a bigger budget, you must measure ROI correctly. If you tell your CFO that 95 percent of your hires came from sourcing and your careers site, then it's highly probable that you won't receive a higher budget, which means you won't be effective in doing your job.

Marketing teams are allotted, on average, 16 times more in budget than recruitment marketing teams. Why? Because marketing teams know how to measure multi touch attribution ROI, report on it and defend it. Still, recruitment marketing teams are held to similar standards of needing to impact revenue, making it necessary to improve attribution efforts.

Conclusion

Employers need to make smart investments today to drive tomorrow's success. To reiterate, with recruitment marketing strategies, it's essential to:

- Identify your target market
- Build awareness
- Gain interest
- Measure ROI

Based on our research, teams are on all ends of the spectrum in their journey to running recruitment as marketing. The best examples and the most progressive employers are doubling down on employer branding and treating it as a core pillar of their recruitment strategy, especially for tech recruitment, and are now investing globally.

They are also leveraging CRMs to capture all the candidates they are attracting with these employer branding efforts, nurturing them and building their database for the future so they can source warm candidates — thus reducing their cold outbound sourcing. Lastly, when asked how they measure the ROI of their recruiting efforts, they reference tracking and measurement they have put in place instead of their ATS hire source data.

To attract top tech talent, outdated strategies must be updated with strategies focusing on marketing your employer brand. Today, employers must build brand awareness and reach candidates where they're at, share information that is important to candidates and measure ROI to optimize their recruitment efforts.



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