

NEXT GENERATION EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

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An Essential Guide to Activating Your Employer Brand and Motivating Your Workforce

WHY EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IS SO IMPORTANT RIGHT NOW

It might be the most mission-critical practice that no one is practicing.

We're talking about employee engagement, or tapping into what motivates employees and leveraging that energy to retain top talent and generate results.

According to a recent Gallup poll, only 30% of employees are engaged in their work. Ironically, the recovering job market isn't helping much either. Employees today are more empowered than ever to change jobs if they aren't inspired by the work, aren't emotionally invested in the company or don't see opportunities for career growth.

For employers, this lack of employee engagement is serious business. Consider these facts: a 2012 Towers Watson work-force study showed that companies with the highest number of "sustainably engaged" employees had an operating margin nearly three times those with the lowest traditional engagement scores. Other studies have shown that return to shareholders is 36% higher in companies with strong employee engagement. Highly engaged employees are 87% less likely to leave than their disengaged peers, saving turnover costs of 50% or more of an employee's annual salary.

Bottom line: employee engagement has a direct impact on the bottom line.

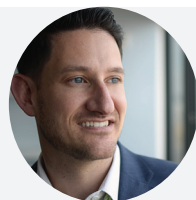
So what does this have to do with brand marketing? A lot, actually. Whether you realize it or not, you have a unique employer brand that should be a clear extension of the corporate brand you market to consumers. Because retention has a direct line to the bottom line, it's up to your company's executive, human resources and marketing teams to create a cohesive, consistent employer brand that resonates inside and outside the company.



Brian Burgess,
Global Director, Employee Practice
MSLGROUP PBJS

"Companies should think of their current and prospective employees as audiences of the brand," says Brian Burgess, Global Director, Employee Practice, MSLGROUP PBJS. "The messages and channels will be slightly different to appeal to these groups, but they should feel the same as the corporate brand, which is why it's so important for marketing and HR to work together." Your employer brand is more than just the written word or the video or the website; it's a culmination of all these things to create an employee experience.

"An employer brand guides how you act as an employer, how you talk to employees and prospects, and how you recruit talent," says Tony Osborn, VP, Employee Practice at MSLGROUP PBJS. **"When your recruitment starts to look and feel like your consumer marketing, it moves everyone toward the same goals."**



Tony Osborn,
VP, Employee Practice
MSLGROUP PBJS

Clearly, this new reality calls for a new perspective. In this paper, the industry's top experts on employee engagement offer a peek inside their practice and give actionable tips, insights and strategies to kick start your employer brand and ignite your workforce right now, including:

- The anatomy of an employee-driven engagement strategy
- How to get to the root of the engagement challenge and reveal the opportunity
- Three ways to boost engagement and transform your employer brand
- How to craft the right narrative to run through all employee journey touch points
- Employee influencers: who they are, why they're important and how to engage them
- Real-world examples of engagement strategies in action and the impact they made

Your people are your greatest assets, but only if they're fully engaged in their jobs. Read on to learn how to get 'em fired up.



THREE WAYS TO BOOST ENGAGEMENT AND TRANSFORM YOUR EMPLOYER BRAND

Now that you know what your employees think, feel and do, the next step is to use that information to craft an engagement strategy.

1. Craft a Clear Employer Brand Narrative

What do you want to be known for and what value do you provide current and prospective employees? If you're not clear on this answer, your workforce won't be either. **"Companies need to give their employees a clear line of sight,"** says Burgess. **"The employer brand... has to be different to stand out from the competition for talent. It also has to be authentic so that what you communicate to external candidates is reality when they step inside."**

MSLGROUP PBJS helped a health company *streamline* a 70-page slide presentation outlining the company's strategy into a one-page document. An illustrator further distilled the strategy into six vignettes and created an animated white board video to be used for conferences and meetings. Simplifying the message made it easy for everyone on the team to explain what they do and created synergy between what the company said and did internally and externally.

2. Boost Your Reputation Through Advocacy

Did you know employers get up to 24 times more reach through employees posting content than through corporate marketing channels? "Friends and family are more trusted conveyors of corporate reputation than any marketing or media relations department," says Burgess.

MSLGROUP PBJS's *Employee Impact* tool aggregates a brand's existing content platforms into one employee-friendly and shareable digital portal. Brands feel secure because all the content has been preapproved by communications and legal, and employees get access to a one-stop shop for sharing information about their workplace to their personal social media sites.

3. Embrace Social and Digital Engagement

Companies who are behind the curve on engaging employees through digital and social media run the risk of alienating digitally connected employees and candidates, which is pretty much everyone these days. Becoming an early adopter boosts retention and productivity and gives you a recruitment edge.

To engage the elusive Gen Y car buyer and change the way dealers engaged consumers, MSLGROUP PBJS client BMW rolled out a next-gen digital platform called Dealer Direct across 338 dealerships. The responsive digital platform works seamlessly on any device and delivers critical change management information via photos, videos and content curated by an editorial director onsite at BMW. It also provides a platform where dealers can connect and collaborate with each other. "Framing the story and narrative helped BMW paint a picture of why they need to change and what the change is. They highlighted early adopters who went through the transformation at their dealerships and showed the results they're getting," says Peter Gaučys Chief Creative Officer, MSLGROUP PBJS. In the first month, the platform generated more than 10,000 page views.

THINK. FEEL. DO: THE ANATOMY OF AN EMPLOYEE-DRIVEN ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Some brands know exactly what's preventing them from reaching full employee engagement. Others know *something's* not working, but struggle to identify exactly what it is and how to course correct. Whatever camp you fall into, the "Think. Feel. Do" methodology can reveal what's holding your employer brand back.

Think. To get to the root of employee engagement problems, you first must understand what employees think about your company *right now*. Is it what an advocate of your brand should be thinking? Sometimes employees' perceptions of where they *think* the company is in the market can create feelings of malaise or discouragement and affect how they work. Knowledge of what's happening with the company — good or bad — can invigorate engagement.

"When people understand the company's position and how their jobs affect results, they get engaged," says Burgess. "If they don't know what's going on or are misinformed, they disconnect and just go through the motions of their jobs."

Feel. Do your employees feel valued as people and believe what they do makes a difference? The problem with top-down communication, as well-intentioned as those vision statements and "pillars" sound in the boardroom, is that your employees have little to nothing to do with them. "Employer brand communications must focus on what people care about in their everyday lives," says Osborn. "We advise clients to translate their corporate messages into 'stories' that help people make that emotional connection."

Do. Finally, what do you want employees to do? Is it different than what they're currently doing? What are the exact behaviors and actions you expect of employees who are engaged and aligned with company goals? Identifying these behaviors allows you to map out steps to developing the right skills to get the results you want.

"If you change how people think and feel, the actions will follow," says Osborn.



Peter Gaučys,
Chief Creative Officer
MSLGROUP PBJS

CASE STUDY: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION IN ACTION



It doesn't get much more competitive than Silicon Valley, where employers like Google and Apple are constantly upping the ante on employee perks to attract and retain top talent. MSLGROUP PBJS collaborates with client eBay across a wide swath of its business to improve recruitment, retention and engagement.

The collaboration began with a look at the company's plans and aspirations for the year and ways to connect them to how and when to engage employees. The goal is to connect tactical plans with the rhythm of business, for instance, identifying key resignation periods (in Silicon Valley, five years is a long time to be in one place) and preempting them with programs three to six months in advance.

"We might suggest a mentorship experience or have them meet with execs at key moments to remotivate passion for working there," says Pia Dierking, Senior Vice President, Client Service, MSLGROUP PBJS. **"It's a huge connect-the-dots on the backend based on data and poll surveys that ties into a calendar sequence and how events should fall throughout the year to hit those sweet spots."**

eBay recognizes that millennials will represent a majority of the company over the next decade, so to attract and keep them, it analyzed how this group's value systems differ from older cohorts and built a program around those results. For example, Millennials are willing to forgo money and compensation packages for mentorship and *experiences* in and out of the office. Fifty percent claimed to have an "entrepreneurial spirit."



Pia Dierking,
Senior Vice President, Client Service
MSLGROUP PBJS

eBay harnessed this desire for experiences (and took on notoriously cool internship programs at Facebook, Google and others) with an event called POWER [UP], a three-day conference in San Francisco designed to attract and convert 500 top university talent prospects to full-time employees. The event featured keynotes from top leaders including CEO John Donahoe and eBay Marketplaces president Devin Wenig. Breakout sessions invited interns to workshop commerce and technology challenges. Nightly activities offered the chance to bond with other interns through casino nights, video games and community service projects. This rare level of access made the interns feel valued and important, and

created a sense that they have a voice and a place to grow at eBay. More than 98 percent of POWER [UP] attendees stated they would "love to return to the company as employees."

"There are new expectations in the employee population," says Marty Cole, Senior Vice President, Client Service, MSLGROUP PBJS. "They want to feel they have something important to contribute and that their unique contribution plays a role in the company's forward momentum and success. That can't be accomplished by paying lip service. You have to have experiences on an ongoing basis to connect them with what you're doing as a company, what you're offering in products and services and how employees can be a part of it."

One way to do that is to leverage technology at events that track real-time sentiment during high-engagement periods. It lets employees register what they think and what they're experiencing, and allows the event team to react in real-time to address sentiment or change course. **"There's a growing expectation that employees should be able to impact what they're involved in, even hour-to-hour," Cole says. Being responsive in real time is just one more way to make attendees feel they are making an impact.**



Marty Cole,
Senior Vice President, Client Service
MSLGROUP PBJS

Another eBay program targeting recently-hired Millennials brought college graduates from across North America to eBay's headquarters in San Jose for a two-week experience to onboard and retain top talent. Leveraging insights about the way Millennials approach learning and the workplace, PBJS knew a conventional, lecture-based delivery wouldn't engage this audience. So it created an immersive program that gave attendees opportunities to connect with thought leaders at the company, participate in real conversations about the future of commerce and develop lasting bonds with their peers.

"It made them feel valued and gave them a platform and outlet to share ideas and get involved in things above their pay grade," says Dierking. "It's the recognition that just because they're young, it doesn't mean they can't think of the next groundbreaking idea."



EMPLOYEE INFLUENCERS: WHO, WHY AND HOW TO ENGAGE

Marketers are well aware of how important influencers are to their consumer brands. But they may overlook the power of their own employees as important influencers for their *employer* brand. Here's a short primer on what you need to know.

Who they are: Influencers are your company's most socially connected and vocal advocates of your brand. They love their jobs and are happy and willing to share that love across internal and external platforms. "Your employees can be some of your biggest advocates," says Dierking. **"They are talking about work on Facebook pages as much as they're posting photos of their kids. It's exceeded early expectations of what social platforms could do."**

How to find them: There's no one methodology for identifying who your company's top influencers are, but there are several ways to find them. One is to ask company leadership who stands out and who brings to life attributes the company looks for; i.e., who embodies that clear employer brand position you identified earlier in the process. Another way is to ask employees who, among their colleagues, they consider most influential (note: it's not always the same people management recommends). Once you have a pool of names, you can conduct audits across social media to get a sense of their influence and reach. Keep in mind that some influencers are quiet at work and busy on social media, and vice-versa.

Why they're important: "In terms of influence on reputation, employees are at the top of the pyramid," says Burgess. **"That's what you want: the pinnacle for engagement. Not only are they great employees, they're also spreading your message and thereby shaping your reputation, recruiting like-minded people with similar values to come work for you."**

How to engage them: The actual engagement platform can take many shapes, from live events and workshops to focus groups or organized social media efforts. The message to influencers, however, should always be the same: we value what you say. Let them know they're an opinion leader and they've been selected to be an ambassador of the company's message. Tell them you'd like to do more with them in a formal way. It makes them feel good and excited to share the love. "Influencer communication should all be in the spirit of, 'we love you and we want you to do more,'" says Burgess.

CREATING THE RALLYING CRY

How to craft the right narrative platform for all employee touch points

A strong theme, slogan or tagline can motivate employees around your company's strategy and vision, as long as it's simple, accessible to global audiences and meaningful to employees on an emotional level. "If you don't nail a strong, genuine rallying cry, you don't have much to stand on as you get into tactical layers," says Gaučys. **"It's the lynchpin that holds the program together and can't be a throwaway. You really have to kick the tires on it if you expect it to ignite a company culture."**



MSLGROUP PBJS client Teva is the world's leading manufacturer of generic pharmaceuticals. Leadership interviews and a thorough "Think. Feel. Do." study of Teva's organization revealed that while the company's Global Operations (TGO) division was strong, this particular group's mission-critical purpose was no longer a point of pride for its employees. TGO's new leadership recognized it needed a creative wrapper for engaging employees with a vision for their future.

A new communication platform based on the slogan, "We Make it Possible," was created and localized across cultures. It reinforced the idea that employees make it possible to deliver affordable medicines worldwide. The word "it" invited the question: what will *you* make possible? The slogan opened doors to all kind of engagement tactics for Teva, from graphics featuring actual employees to celebrate their own accomplishments, to a town hall launch event featuring the slogan on banners and in motion graphics. It was also adopted into a story gathering campaign where employees were invited to contribute personal perspectives on what they make possible at Teva and what Teva makes possible for people.

"It exemplifies the porousness we always want in an engagement concept," says Gaučys. "It has wonderful emotional equity and naturally gives rise to tactics to get employees to find that point of 'it' in the message and give it their own definition."

ABOUT MSLGROUP PBJS

MSLGROUP is a global strategic and communications agency. PBJS is a full-service experiential agency with in-house creative, production, digital and video. Both within the Publicis Groupe network, MSLGROUP PBJS is the fusion of these two divisions, specializing in employee engagement. Our Employee Practice builds employer brands and reputations and strengthens engagement between employers and employees to produce better results for everyone involved. Our focus is narrow – employees only – but our expertise is broad. We deploy leading capabilities in strategic consulting, digital and social strategy and activation and creative multichannel engagement programs. Our work centers on employer brand, employer reputation, recruitment marketing, change communications and social and employee engagement. Our clients include Microsoft, eBay, PayPal, BMW, Ahold USA and Hilton Worldwide.

