Stop Chasing Away Top Female Talent With Your Employer Brand

Women are taking control of their futures one job search at a time – and they refuse to settle for mediocrity. In fact, a November 2017 report from CareerArc of 1,162 respondents found that female job-seekers surveyed were 33 percent less likely than male job-seekers to apply to a one-star rated company.

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The report also found women 25 percent more likely to rely on employer-review sites when vetting a potential employer. Unfortunately, they were also more likely than men to abandon a job application after finding negative online reviews.

Think about that: Most companies, after all, have a negative review some time, but they're not all missing out on promising talent. So, what's the catch?

The key lies with an employer's brand. It's essential for companies to reach out and connect with female talent beyond any low ratings or negative reviews they receive. To do this, recruiters need a better understanding of what's important to female job-seekers and how to prove to them their company can meet those needs. Here's how to do that – by developing an employer brand that's appealing female job-seekers:

1. Mind your word choices.

Artfully describing a company, position and benefits is a skill all recruiters need. We often think of this as one of the first – and most important – interactions a company has

with a candidate. But along the way, seemingly harmless words or phrases may scare off the diverse candidates you want.

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Daina Middleton, CEO of Ansira, realized, for instance that her company's job descriptions were doing just that. Some subtle wording changes made a huge impact on how job-seekers saw her company, she realized. "Job descriptions that have too many qualifications or are worded in a non-collaborative manner are less attractive to diverse candidates," Middleton told me via email from her Dallas-based company.

So, bring your entire team in on the process. Ask others if the job description you've prepared truly portrays the company's culture and its short and long-term goals, as well as its mission and vision.

2. Show candidates they belong.

When a company's employer brand doesn't show how women fit into its male-dominated field, those candidates will quickly assume that the job and culture aren't a good match.

Dot Mynahan, director of field operations at Otis Elevator Company, told me she's experienced this feeling first-hand. In fact, at Otis, a West Palm Beach, Fla.-based elevator service company, less than 9 percent of field operations workers are women. Only 3 percent of those women are managers.

Mynahan told me she believes a major problem is that skilled trades are still perceived as "men's work." For those who do pursue this line of work, often they are the only women on their team. This leaves them without others with whom to compare experiences.

Otis has started addressing this issue with a mentor program, Mynahan said. "We created FORWARD – an initiative focused on

fostering a more female-friendly environment and designed to improve the retention and advancement of women within Otis field operations through mentoring, professional development and networking opportunities," she said.

As a result, Mynahan and her team are now attending career fairs, local technical college events and apprenticeship interviews, where they strive to show women where and how they fit into the elevator trade.

To make an impact on employer brands, mentorship must go well beyond onboarding and training. Ask your women team members to go out to recruiting events and to take to social media to offer mentorships to fresh talent.

Encourage these women team members to open up about their own successes and their career challenges. Seeing this side of the company will demonstrate to female listeners that there's room for them to grow, be mentored and succeed at your company.

3. Let employees speak their truth

At Lever, a recruiting software company in San Francisco, employees share their passions, thoughts, feelings and industry experiences in blog articles.

Leela Srinivasan, chief marketing officer at Lever, described the genesis of that strategy via email: "We helped some of our more passionate employees capture their stories via our employee blog, *Inside Lever*, while sharing those same blog posts on LinkedIn," she wrote.

Those posts got around: One, about women in tech, received thousands of likes and hundreds of comments, Srinivasan said. The sales team grew, and female representation doubled within eight months after that post.

Srinivasan continued, pointing out that, "Seventy-four percent of all women who joined our firm during that period, and 80

percent of our new female sales hires, said that Lever blog posts had influenced their decision to either apply or accept their offer.”

Related: Over One-Third of Women Say Managers Don’t Address Disrespectful Behavior Toward Women. And That’s Your Fault.

So adopt Lever’s move for your own company. Use your company blog as a platform for employees to share their successes and struggles. You’ll see how each story forms a personalized contact between your company and job-seekers. Negative reviews will likely persist. But they’ll struggle to overshadow the stronger connections that form when women get to talk to other women.

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