



MSL

**Building
a better
employer
brand**

How evolving your employer brand will attract the best talent and build employee loyalty

Brilliant businesses are built from the inside out. Employees unlock commercial success, make or break reputations and generate powerful advocacy, from the bottom of an organisation to the top. Yet, attracting talent has never been more difficult. Digital, diversity, the rise of the gig economy, an increased shift to contract work and a need to attract multi-generational audiences all make for a highly challenging talent attraction environment.

The landscape has changed significantly in recent years. Soft skills have become the new hard skills and lifelong learning is crucial for careers in a world dominated by rapid, constant technological disruption. Workers who have stepped up to the challenge of doing 'more with less' over the last few years are craving greater flexibility from their careers, while demanding an inclusive and authentic culture in which to flourish. They are also seeking reassurance that the purpose and values of the organisations they work for fit with their own. To complicate matters further, the regulatory environment in the UK is fuelling confusion on matters ranging from the apprenticeship levy, our post-Brexit economic direction and the future of international recruitment. It's no wonder employers are struggling

to find the right formula with which to address their talent challenges, both internal and external.

Building and evolving a strong employer brand, rooted in a strong culture, is essential for building a strong organisation. Every employer is unique, but the issues most are facing right now share some common threads.

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MORE IMPORTANTLY, PERHAPS, DO YOU UNDERSTAND THEIR MOTIVATIONS AND THEIR VALUES?”



The 2017 [World Economic Forum Global Shapers Survey](#) found that over 40% of young people think sense of purpose/impact on society is one of the most important criteria when considering a career opportunity.

Five key steps for building a stronger employer brand



More Google than Gringotts

Lloyds Banking Group wanted to attract top digital talent to continue transforming for success in a digital world. But how could a 250-year-old high street bank compete with tech giants for the attention of this highly skilled and sought-after talent pool? MSL created an online hub to showcase the Group's exciting digital projects and the great entrepreneurial culture within its digital teams. We then built a robust, targeted campaign to distribute and amplify the content from the hub across social media using paid and influencer strategies. The campaign resulted in 23,000 visitors to the dedicated careers site, 5000 job applications and 30% of applicants mentioning the content as part of their application.

[See how we transformed Lloyds Banking Group's employer brand here](#)

DEFINE YOUR AUDIENCE

Do you really know who you are trying to reach? Do you know how they consume information, or what excites them? More importantly, perhaps, do you understand their motivations and their values? All of these things are critical for success in employer branding, whether you are looking at current or future employees.

The work we do at MSL is based around detailed, scientific insight, in which we aim to define the personae of your employees and your future hires. It isn't enough to simply say "we want to hire more contractors/females/ethnically diverse candidates" – you need to have a clear view of who they really are and how to build trust with them. For that, you need to know how to get a message to them, and although traditional advertising can support a wider campaign, success in today's world requires laser-targeting the right people, building a conversation with them and convincing them that your organisation shares their values.

CONCENTRATE ON CULTURE

All organisations have their own distinct culture, and understanding your own culture is the vital first step in building a great employer brand. This process demands honesty and openness. In an age of Glassdoor, questionable consumer review sites and fake news, authenticity is key. Let's

face it, not everyone will want to work for you – and that's fine. You don't have to be all things to all people. Try instead to celebrate the positive elements of your culture, while taking on board feedback about how you can improve it, so that you can become a more attractive employer and a better performing business.

It's important to take a considered approach to defining your company's culture. Traditional face-to-face meetings and surveys should be backed up with innovative and engaging digital forums and workshops, to build a clear, quantitative and qualitative picture of what your employees and external audiences think of your organisation's culture - and where they think it could be improved. From this, you can start to build an employer brand roadmap, which starts with today, builds in your aspirations about where you want to get to and focuses the messages on the defined audiences.



CULTURE IS SIMPLY A SHARED WAY OF DOING SOMETHING WITH A PASSION."

Brian Chesky,
Co-Founder, CEO, Airbnb



Employees quitting their jobs because of poor company culture costs the UK economy £23.6 billion per year, according to research by breatheHR. The Culture Economy report found that a third (34%) of British employees have quit their jobs as a result of dissatisfaction with their company's culture. And yet culture is still not seen as a priority in many small businesses, with the report finding that more than half (60%) of SME leaders feel a strong culture is a 'nice to have'.

The report also revealed the benefits of positive workplace cultures, including improved morale and relationships (cited by 44% of employees surveyed), better customer service and satisfaction (listed by 43%), and reduced employee turnover (35% cited).

SHIFT FROM DIVERSITY TO INCLUSION

Diversity is an initiative; inclusion is cultural. Taking an audience-led approach enables employers not just to attract people from diverse backgrounds, but crucially helps them build the instinctively inclusive cultures that breed success in our diverse world. Sometimes, the audiences you need to target have limited recognition of your brand, or even mistrust it. Nevertheless, if you want to be truly diverse, you need to begin with an understanding of the mindset and the culture of the people you want to attract and engage.

Let's not forget that culture informs the way people think and behave, as a result of their values. It's the same with organisations, and for

new joiners a sense of culture, and its alignment or misalignment with their values, is apparent from day one, or even earlier. Effective employer branding enables organisations who have understood their audiences and their individual cultures to identify what needs to change in order to achieve true inclusion, where people of every class, colour, race, religion, sexual preference, gender and ability are valued equally and have an equal voice.

BUILD YOUR BRAND FROM THE INSIDE-OUT

How do you bring all this together in a coherent way to inspire, engage and attract talent? It's all about using the most authentic voices to speak on your behalf. That's to say, your employees.

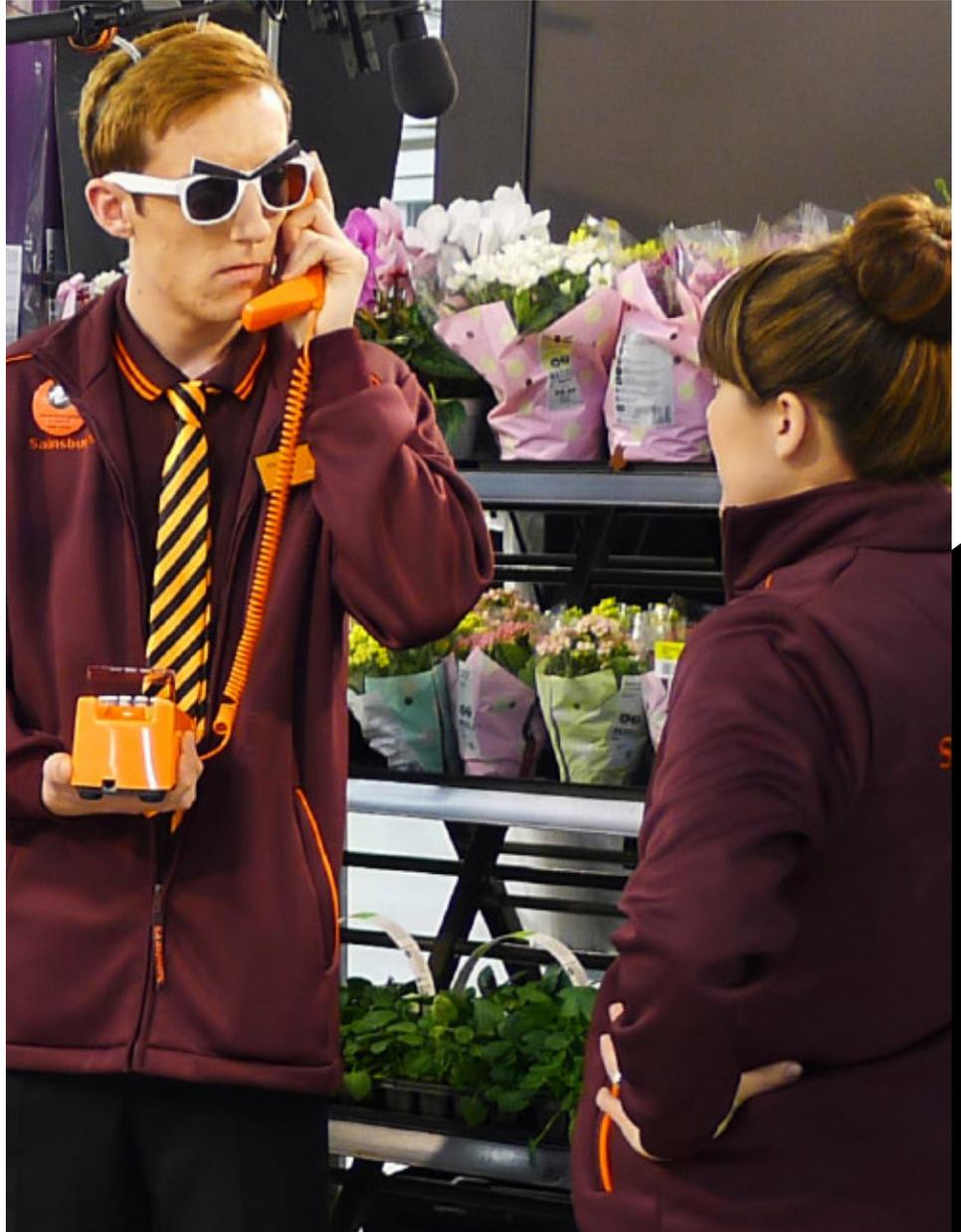
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**TRUE LEADERSHIP
STEMS FROM
INDIVIDUALITY
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Sheryl Sandberg
COO, Facebook

Influencers are often used to help with communicating with a particular audience, but however useful an influencer might be, they seldom come close to the impact your employees can have on your audiences. These are the people who live your culture day-to-day, who know the good – and the not-so-good – things about working for you, and can share real stories about their experiences. It’s all about giving your employees an authentic, honest and at times quite raw voice, in order to convince people that they are actually hearing about the reality of an organisation.

Values and behaviours – the building blocks of culture – are crucial here, and the best way for your employees to demonstrate these is through story-telling. Essential to this is the sourcing of insightful, genuinely interesting and culturally representative stories, told through the mouths of the employees who experienced them. No scripts, no prompts, no marketing spiel. Just the plain and simple truth.



Little Stories, Big Difference

In an age where consumers find it hard to trust big corporations, Sainsbury's wanted to demonstrate commitment to its corporate values in a fun, approachable way. MSL's challenge was to showcase how Sainsbury's employees live and breathe the company's ethos. We created and directed 42 short films with Sainsbury's staff as the stars and ambassadors of the five corporate values. Every story captivated

hearts – along with clicks, likes and shares. We created a Little Stories, Big Difference hub on the corporate website, where people could watch their colleagues play a starring role. The success of the Little Stories campaign led Sainsbury's to commission MSL to create new 'Corporate Responsibility Walls', large format in-store advertising telling values stories direct to consumers across the Sainsbury's estate.

GET THE MESSAGE OUT THERE

So, you know your audiences, you've defined your culture today and looked at where it needs to be tomorrow, you're committed to inclusion and your employees are happy to tell their stories. All you need now is to get the message seen and heard, both externally for job seekers and internally for those all important employees.

The last of the five core components of building a strong employee brand is defining a channel strategy that touches all of your audiences, serving them with content that stimulates and engages them in a medium which they trust and with which they regularly interact. Cultural insights help to determine which channels will work best while a deep analytics capability will enable you to flex your campaigns, your messaging and your content in real-time to ensure that your approach sparks a real conversation between your audience and your brand.

BUILDING YOUR EMPLOYER BRAND DOESN'T STOP HERE

OK, so we said five steps but the reality is that employer branding is a continuous process that will evolve with your organisation. The need for authenticity will only increase in the coming years. As is so often the case with human endeavour, while social media was intended as a force for connection and positivity, it has also become a source of division and mistrust. Utterly ubiquitous, 24/7 advertising is also proving to be a turn-off for many people. Frankly, we only have so much capacity for being sold to, and employer branding must become a welcome and powerful alternative in the short to medium term.

We are already evolving the conversation between job-seekers, employees and employers, and delivering a new narrative of reality, openness, humility and vulnerability. In the not too distant future we predict that people will crave safe digital spaces in which they can investigate and ask questions of an employer, testing the values and behaviours of each organisation in a more personal, interactive way. We see the battle to engage the best talent being fought principally on culture – organisations that refuse to shift from their traditional approaches will rapidly become irrelevant.

It is a fascinating and thrilling time to be involved in the employer branding space, and we will continue to be at the forefront of what is possible, challenging our clients to be better, to look inwards to find the extraordinary stories that represent their culture and to celebrate the values and behaviours of their unique people. If you'd like to know more, please get in touch. You'll see we practice what we preach.



MSL

We'd love to talk
to you about your
employer branding.

Contact Claire Hutchings,
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and join the conversation.

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