

PROVING THE VALUE OF **EMPLOYER BRANDING**



An exclusive *Workforce/Monster* survey reveals the recruiting and retention ROI of telling your brand's story, and shows how you can get buy-in from your company's leaders.

MONSTER Workforce®

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, forward-thinking organizations have taken steps to develop their employer brand. These companies see the value in developing a set of tools and policies that establish their employee value proposition (EVP) to current and prospective employees. They recognize that employer brand functions in much the same way as consumer brands do. Employer brand creates value by offering a positive impression of their organization and demonstrating why employees want to work for one company over another. By engaging potential employees with their EVP, these organizations use branding to achieve recruiting, retention and employee engagement goals.

Many companies recognize the value of their employer brand to position themselves as an employer of choice for top talent. This comes at a time when changing expectations — of the workforce and job candidates — have introduced new risks and opportunities for organizations in their efforts to recruit and retain the best talent. Organizations must also create an online presence that will engage potential employees — wherever they are online — on the company website, in company communications, on company review sites and, of course, on job boards.

How do companies achieve this success? Organizations should target both current and potential employees with branding efforts. Metrics such as current employee satisfaction and Net Promoter Score can identify successes and weaknesses in programs and initiatives. Employers who find value in employer brand recognize the inherent value of both their people and the work culture as indicators of organizational success. Employer branding strategies both create and follow leadership buy-in. Companies just starting out with a branding message can start small and use their success to generate leadership buy-in, which will in turn create more support for telling the brand story.

Employers who find value in employer brand recognize the inherent value of both their people and the work culture as indicators of organizational success.

Yet for many companies, the means to create an effective employer brand are challenging. Which employer branding practices produce successful results? How are these results tracked? Is there a set of best practices to follow to maximize results in developing a brand strategy? Where do organizations stand in relation to others in their industry?

To better understand how companies are creating a case for employer brand, the Human Capital Media Research and Advisory Group — the research arm of *Workforce* magazine — partnered with Monster to create the 2017 Workforce *Employer Branding Practices* survey. We asked HR practitioners for their thoughts on top employer branding challenges. We asked questions about brand maturity and developed a maturity model. Examining the data by organizational maturity identified best practices for branding initiatives.

KEY FINDINGS FROM OUR SURVEY REVEAL DIFFERENCES IN EMPLOYER BRANDING BY MATURITY

1. Nearly 4 in 10 organizations have mature or vanguard employer branding practices (as defined on page TK)
2. Organizations just starting out with branding have difficulty telling their brand story
3. Mature organizations have greater leadership buy-in from C-suite leaders
4. Mature organizations have greater assessment of their branding ROI
5. Mature organizations face fewer challenges to successful employer branding, in part thanks to their more successful leadership buy-in

DEMOGRAPHICS For full demographics information, see Appendix.

MATURITY MODEL DEFINED

Before we examine employer brand best practices, first we need to know where these organizations think they stand in their employer brand development. So, we asked questions to find out how many organizations were aware of their employer brand, and how many were actively working to affect it. Were they trying to stay one step ahead of their competitors, or taking a reactive attitude? Once we received answers and parsed them into buckets, we examined each level to see if organizations at similar stages behaved similarly.

In the 2017 Workforce *Employer Branding Practices* survey, we defined a four-step maturity model. For the rest of this report, charts will compare two groups: **beginner** and **mature**. The **beginner** group combines *beginner* and *reactive* responses. The **mature** group combines *mature* and *vanguard* responses.

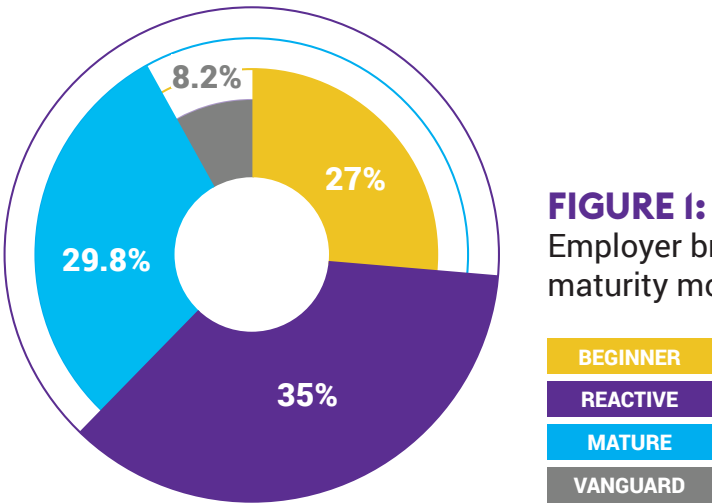


FIGURE 1:
Employer brand maturity model

Here’s what survey participants told us:

BEGINNER/REACTIVE ORGANIZATIONS (61.2 PERCENT)

BEGINNER (27 percent)

Beginner organizations have not invested in initiatives to improve employer brand. They are only starting to think about employer branding best practices. They get little to no buy-in, due to little or no measurement or previous success.

REACTIVE (34.1 percent)

Reactive organizations have some employer branding programs in place, most of which are in response to crises or identified problems. They have greater buy-in than beginner organizations, but are not truly in control of their brand.

MATURE/VANGUARD ORGANIZATIONS (38.8 PERCENT)

MATURE (30.3 percent)

Mature organization have a clear branding strategy and use best practices. They experience greater buy-in, partly due to confidence in their brand story and a more focused message and measurement.

VANGUARD (8.6 percent)

Vanguard organizations consistently use best practices for employer branding. They experiment to find new practices that will improve their employer brand. They have total leadership buy-in and are innovative and one step ahead of the curve.

BEGINNER	REACTIVE	MATURE	VANGUARD
• No leadership buy-in. • Doesn't communicate their EVP. • Lacks branding/storytelling skills.	• C-suite doesn't really believe in the value of employer brand. • Trouble communicating about employer brand. • Has a basic employer brand social media strategy.	• Has leadership buy-in • Showcases work culture in job postings. • Multichannel communications strategy.	• Complete leadership buy-in. • Looks for innovative ways to communicate about employer brand. • Has no difficulty finding skills on the branding team.

WHAT'S YOUR EMPLOYER BRAND STORY?

The first step to talking about your brand is to know what to talk about.

Having a clear, articulated message is critical for a strong employer brand. What does your brand stand for and how does that vision affect your employees? Now more than ever, employees are attracted to organizations they feel reflect their own values. Employees who feel connected to the company mission have higher productivity levels and are more engaged at their job. This is especially true for younger workers; recent research suggests that 67 percent of millennials whose company's mission or values makes them feel like their job matters are engaged in their work, compared to only 14 percent of millennials who are engaged at work when they don't feel like the company's mission and values makes them feel important.¹

Having a solid set of values and a mission that connects with employees is one way to get high potentials in the door, yet some organizations struggle with this goal. Close to a third of beginner organizations (29.3 percent) struggle to identify their brand story, compared with only 6.3 percent of mature organizations (Figure 2).

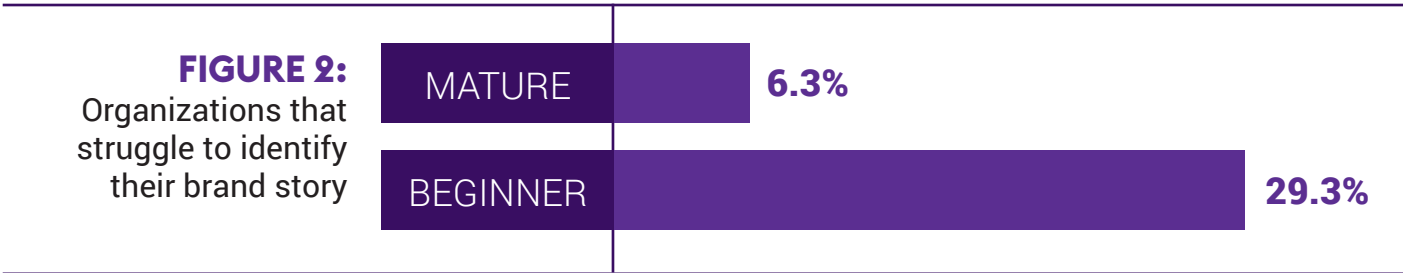
Clearly, the mature group knows who they are and can clearly articulate that value proposition to potential employees. Identifying their brand story is a good starting place for organizations wanting to increase their brand efforts.

What is your company's mission and values? Do you have a clear employee value proposition? Why should people want to work for your organization? Answering these questions and disseminating the answers across multiple channels is a good first step to energizing your employer brand.

Once you identify your employer brand story, the next step is to broadcast it.

DO:
Have a clear brand story.
Communicate your employee value proposition across multiple channels.
Include mission and values statements in job postings.

Now more than ever, employees are attracted to organizations they feel reflect their own values.



¹ Rigoni, B., and Nelson, B. (2016). *Millennials Not Connecting with Their Company's Mission*. Gallup.

HOW ARE YOU SHARING YOUR BRAND STORY?

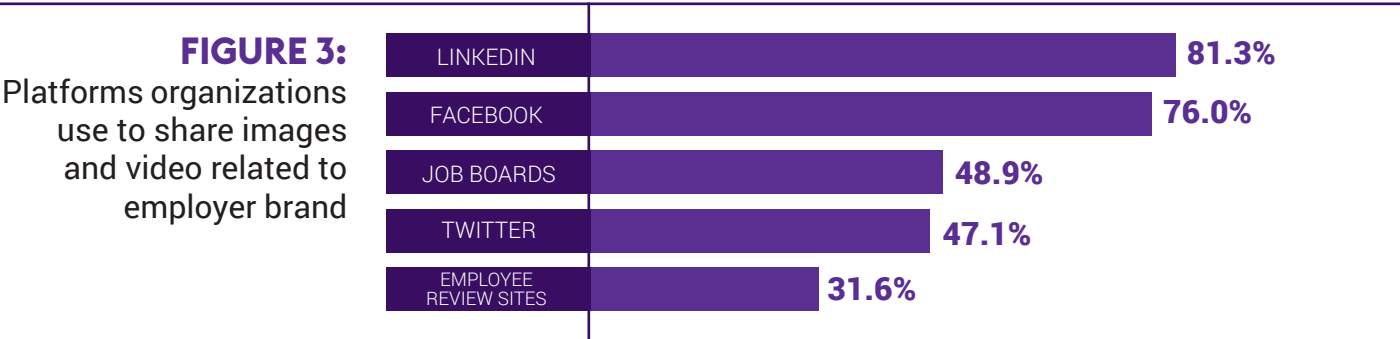
Where should your message live? Everywhere.

Once your organization has identified its unique brand story, the next step is to communicate it far and wide. This will help increase the likelihood that high potentials will see your story and apply to your organization. But what channels should you use? How should you allocate your resources and choose a channel to focus your efforts on?

According to our survey findings, all organizations use similar channels to tell the brand story. Social media sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook are the overwhelming favorites. Having a presence on both sites is a baseline at this point; more than 8 in 10 organizations use LinkedIn to share images and video about their employer brand, with Facebook usage not far behind (Figure 3).

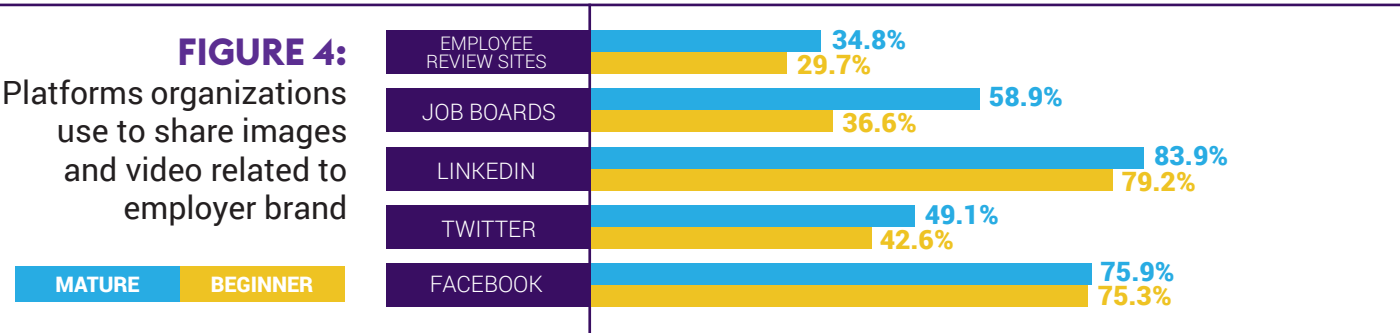
DO:

- Take your branding to social media and beyond.
- Recognize that Facebook and LinkedIn are the baseline for telling your brand story.
- Go where the job hunters are.



Yet social media sites are not the only outlets organizations have to share their brand story. Mature organizations also use several other channels besides the usual suspects and are more likely than beginner organizations to place images and video about their employee brand on job boards such as Monster. They are also more likely to reach out through Twitter and employee review sites (Figure 4). With potential employees dispersed across the internet, organizations need to follow suit and spread their message far and wide.

What format do organizations use on these various sites? Survey responses reflect a strong pivot to video over the coming years, as organizations look to tell more of a visual story about their brand. In fact, nearly half of all organizations surveyed (46.7 percent) plan to increase their spending in video production in the coming year.



WHAT DOES BUY-IN LOOK LIKE AT YOUR ORGANIZATION?

Are your senior leaders invested in your branding message? Give them a reason to be.

We've already seen how organizations plan to increase spending on video production in the coming year to further their brand story. This spending reflects a broader trend, as nearly half of all organizations (46.9 percent) plan to increase overall spending for employer branding in the coming year. Along with video production, areas in which companies are more likely to increase spending include employer and career websites, social media placement and digital advertising (Figure 5).

DO:

Gain the support of senior leaders for employer branding.

Find cross-functional allies in key departments, like marketing, PR and social media.

Use ROI metrics to demonstrate to senior leaders the success of your employer brand.

FIGURE 5:

Areas likely to see increased spending next year



To achieve this level of needed funding, organizations will need leadership buy-in. The question is, how did they achieve it? Who are the stakeholders in this process? Who will need to approve employer branding initiatives? And what does employer branding success look like?

According to our survey, stakeholders will come from all areas across the organization. While most organizations identify human resources as a key stakeholder, members of the communications and recruitment teams often have a say at many organizations. A closer look at the data reveals some differences between the beginner and mature organizations regarding stakeholders. While beginner and mature organizations involve HR at roughly the same rates, mature organizations are much more likely to involve other areas of the organization, such as communications and PR (Figure 6). These departments can assist with specialized skills, tailoring the brand message and EVP and disseminating that message across multiple channels.

FIGURE 6:

Stakeholders with responsibility for brand message (by maturity level)



WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES TO SECURING BUY-IN FOR EMPLOYER BRAND?

Branding success comes with money, skills and time

As organizations look to increase their spending on employer brand and spread their brand story far and wide, what kind of roadblocks can they expect along the way? Do beginner organizations face similar problems as more mature companies? Do those issues diminish as organizations advance along the maturity curve?

While more success doesn't make roadblocks go away completely, survey data shows that mature organizations face far fewer roadblocks than beginner organizations. One of the most striking differences is leadership buy-in. Lack of leadership buy-in is a critical challenge for some —especially organizations that are just starting out with their employer branding practices. In fact, beginner organizations are twice as likely as mature organizations to report a lack of leadership buy-in as a critical challenge (Figure 7).

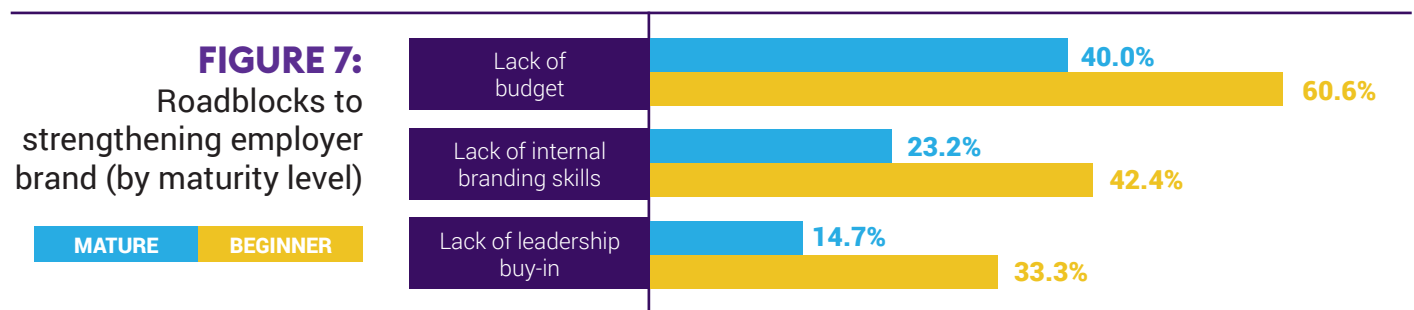
A third challenge is a lack of internal branding skills. Beginner organizations reported this challenge almost twice as often as mature organizations in our survey. To truly succeed at employer branding, organizations will need to reskill their teams in branding best practices and provide them with the tools they need to tell their brand story.

DO:

Start with low-budget branding projects, then show results to secure more funds.

Sync up with others in your organization who have branding skills.

Communicate successes to leadership.



HOW CAN YOU ADVANCE YOUR EMPLOYER BRAND?

Gather a team and give them dedicated resources to better share their successes.

Beyond leadership buy-in and training internal teams, how else can organizations have success with employer branding? Key tactics include sharing the responsibility across multiple people and setting metrics for branding that can be used to demonstrate ROI to senior leaders.

Branding shouldn't be the job of just one person in the organization, even if the organization is small. Assigning a few people to address branding as a team can have a noticeable impact on branding success. Our study found mature organizations are more likely to assign a dedicated, cross-functional team to branding efforts. On the other hand, nearly a third of organizations fail to dedicate any resources to employer branding at all (Figure 8).

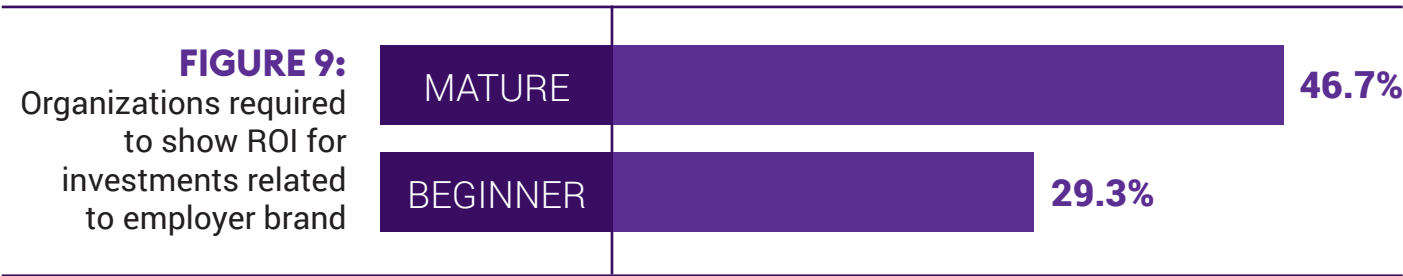
- DO:
- Measure branding success with metrics.

Ensure metrics are tied to organizational recruiting and retention goals.

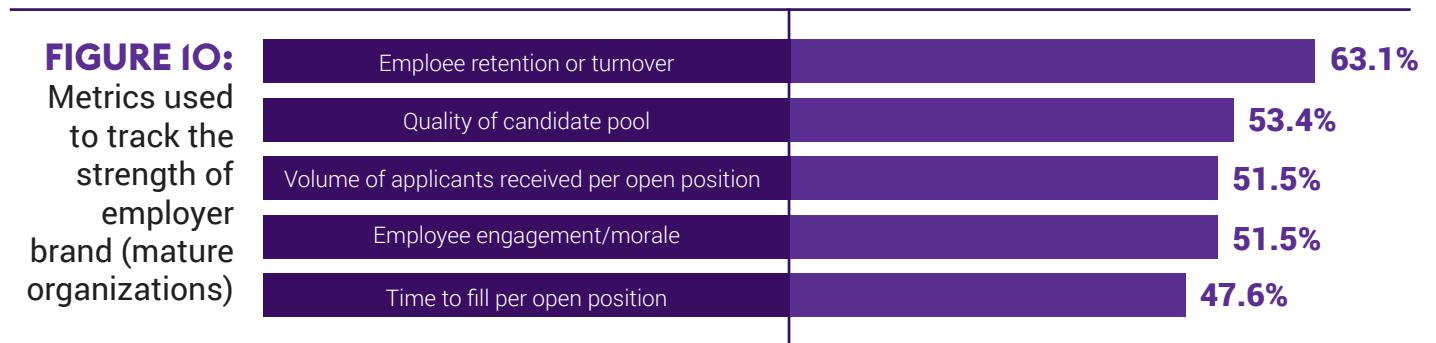
Make branding the responsibility of a dedicated team.



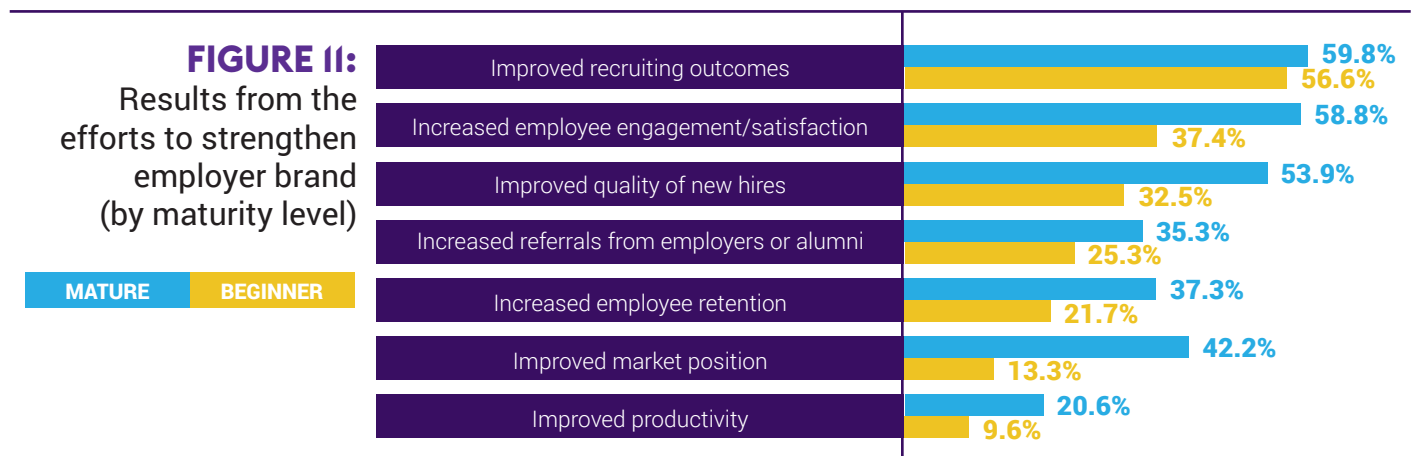
As part of their employer brand strategy, organizations should have metrics in place to measure the success of their employer brand. What does your organization want to accomplish with your brand story? Greater hiring numbers? Stronger retention? More diverse hires? Metrics are one way to achieve accountability with branding to prevent your employer brand from languishing. Our survey found that nearly half of all mature organizations (46.7 percent) are required to demonstrate a return on investment with employer brand, compared with less than a third of beginner organizations (29.3 percent) (Figure 9). With demonstrable ROI available, teams will have an easier time communicating the success of their employer brand to senior leaders.



What metrics should organizations consider when examining the success of their employer branding? Our survey findings reveal that mature organizations use both soft and hard metrics to track the success of their branding efforts. From hard metrics like volume of applicants per open position to soft metrics like the quality of their candidate pool, organizations rely on more than one metric (Figure 10).



For those organizations that follow best practices — having a dedicated team to support employer brand outcomes, produce a budget, identify metrics, assess those metrics and disseminate their brand story far and wide — what outcomes do they see for their efforts? While beginner and mature organizations report statistically similar outcomes for improved recruiting rate, that result is a little vague. Are there any more specific outcomes that teams could take to senior leaders to demonstrate the success of their programs and secure leader buy-in? Thankfully, there are. Survey findings show specific outcomes such as increased retention or improved market position happen at mature organizations in greater numbers than at beginner organizations (Figure 11).



CONCLUSION

More than ever, employees want to feel morally and ethically connected with their workplaces. Younger generations especially want to work for organizations that share their own values. In this climate, having a brand strategy is crucial to meeting organizational recruitment and retention goals.

When viewed along a maturity curve, organizations that tell their brand story proactively have a better chance at improving retention, increasing market share and getting leadership buy-in for branding.

The good news is that developing a better branding program doesn't require much:

-
- Mature organizations have dedicated cross-functional teams assigned to branding and have such teams in place across the company.
 - Branding messages should go beyond the basic social media strategy and include job boards and employee review sites.
 - Metrics, identified at the start, should be assessed and delivered to senior management.
-

These actions will both increase buy-in for employer brand and contribute to organizational talent success.

ABOUT

Monster

Monster is a global online employment solution for people seeking jobs and the employers who need great people. We've been doing this for more than 20 years, and have expanded from our roots as a "job board" to a global provider of a full array of job seeking, career management, recruitment and talent management products and services.

At the heart of our success and our future is innovation: We are changing the way people think about work, and we're helping them actively improve their lives and their workforce performance with new technology, tools and practices.

Workforce

Workforce is a multimedia publication that covers the intersection of people management and business strategy. Our community of senior-level human resources executives and C-level officers are the key decision-makers on talent management matters in the 2,500 largest corporations in America. They read us for our editorial focus and relevance to help them improve their business — and their bottom line — through effective management of the workforce.

For more, visit www.workforce.com.

Human Capital Media

The Human Capital Media (HCM) Research and Advisory Group is the research division of Human Capital Media, publisher of *Chief Learning Officer*, *Talent Economy* and *Workforce* magazines. The Research and Advisory Group specializes in partnered custom content solutions — customizable and proprietary deliverables that integrate seamlessly with existing marketing programs. Our proprietary Talent Tracker data service gives practitioners point-of-need data analytics access to inform strategic HR decisions. By leveraging access to senior-level decision-makers and identifying industry trends, the HCM Research and Advisory Group can deliver keen insight into all areas of L&D, talent and HR.

For inquiries, contact Sarah Kimmel, vice president: skimmel@humancapitalmedia.com.

APPENDIX

Survey Dates

September-November 2017

Survey Respondents

470

Functional Area of Respondents

Human resources: 51.1 percent

Talent management: 9.7 percent

Recruiting/talent acquisition: 9.4 percent

Marketing: 5.0 percent

Recruiting/staffing organization: 2.5 percent

Communications: 1.6 percent

Public relations: 0.6 percent

Other: 20.3 percent

Organization Size

<1,000: 58 percent

>1,000: 42 percent

Geographic Distribution

One country, one location: 34.8 percent

One country, multiple locations: 39.2 percent

Some global presence: 9.7 percent

Highly distributed: 16.3 percent

Figures may not total 100 percent due to rounding.