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HR.com's State of Employer Branding 2025

Implement a consistently applied employer brand strategy to drive success across key HR areas

JANUARY 2025

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Executive Summary

About the Survey

HR.com's "State of Employer Branding 2025" survey ran from October to December 2024. We gathered responses from 202 HR professionals in virtually every industry vertical. Respondents are from all over the world, with the majority from North America, especially the United States.

The respondents represent a broad cross-section of employers by number of employees, ranging from small businesses with fewer than 50 employees to enterprises with 20,000+ employees. Two-thirds of the respondents represent midsize and large organizations.

In the area of employer branding, there's good and bad news as we enter 2025. The good news is that 62% of HR professionals say their employer brand is above average or excellent at enhancing their organization's reputation. The bad news is that far fewer believe that their brands are good at attracting or engaging employees.

Our study also finds only 28% of organizations have a consistently applied and comprehensive employer branding strategy in place. This lack of consistency may help explain why branding initiatives tend to be better at enhancing reputation than at aiding key HR priorities such as retention, recruitment, and engagement.

In this report, we share insights both into branding successes and challenges. Along the way, we discuss and elaborate on branding practices that are linked to building stronger employer brands.

Definitions

For the purpose of this report and the associated survey, we provided respondents with the following two definitions:

An **employer brand** is the reputation of an organization as a workplace. It reflects how current and potential employees perceive the organization. Every company has an employer brand, whether or not it's actively managed.

Employer branding is the effort an organization makes to enhance and communicate the appeal of working there. It influences not only job candidates and employees but also how the market and customers view the company.

Our Major Research Findings

Major Finding 1

Most organizations have a strong company reputation but are struggling in other key areas.

- 62% say their organization's employer brand is above average or excellent at enhancing the company's reputation.
- However, less than half say their employer brand is successful in enhancing:
    - diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB)
    - talent attraction
    - employee engagement
    - employee retention

Major Finding 2

Organizations have a huge void to fill when it comes to employer branding strategy.

- Only 28% of respondents report having a comprehensive and consistently implemented employer branding strategy.
    - 32% have strategies that are inconsistently applied.
    - Alarmingly, 40% lack a formal branding strategy, though 10% say they are in the process of developing one.
- Only 36% say they dedicate sufficient resources to developing an intentionally cultivated employer brand, while 34% say they dedicate resources but that they are insufficient.
- Nearly half of the organizations (49%) update their employer branding strategies on an as-needed basis, reflecting reactive rather than proactive planning.

Major Finding 3

The top five barriers to creating a successful employer brand are:

- insufficient personnel devoted to branding (45%)
- lack of financial resources (39%)
- lack of interest from leadership (35%)
- lack of data/metrics (35%)
- time constraints (35%)

Major Finding **4**

The good news is many are starting to recognize the importance of the employer brand.

- 77% of organizations acknowledge that employer branding is at least moderately important to HR's overall strategy.
- And 49% say their employer branding budget has increased slightly or a lot over the last two years.

Major Finding **5**

Organizations use a range of metrics to gauge their employer brand.

- The five most effective metrics that organizations use to evaluate their employer brand are:
  - employee retention rates (45%)
  - employee engagement surveys (45%)
  - candidate experience feedback (37%)
  - social media analytics (likes, shares, comments) (31%)
  - ratings on employer review platforms (e.g., Glassdoor) (29%)

- However, 24% of organizations don't evaluate their employer brand at all.

Major Finding **6**

Communicating about their employer brand is crucial to attracting talent.

- Organizations use methods like:
  - job ads (75%)
  - employee referrals (72%)
  - events such as job fairs, conferences, etc. (49%)

- Career sites (62%) and major job boards (53%) are leading platforms for communicating employer brands.

Major Finding 7

A few key trends are expected to impact employer branding in the near future.

- The following trends are most commonly expected to impact employer branding strategy over the next two years:
  - focus on employee well-being (48%)
  - personalized employee and candidate experiences (36%)
  - greater integration of technology in branding efforts (35%)
- AI is expected to influence employer branding in the near future through:
  - improved targeting and sourcing of candidates (41%)
  - personalized candidate experiences (36%)
  - automated recruitment processes (34%)
  - enhanced analytics for brand measurement (34%)
  - AI-driven content creation (34%)

Major Finding 8

Compared to less branded organizations (that is those with weaker talent attraction via brands), those that are well-branded (that is those with strong talent attraction) are:

- 3.6X more likely to say their employer brand is above average or excellent at enhancing employee engagement
- 3.5X more likely to have a comprehensive employer branding strategy that is consistently implemented
- 2.6X more likely to use talent communities to attract prospective employees
- 2.6X more likely to say AI will influence their employer branding strategy by providing insights on employee sentiments
- 2.4X more likely to have dedicated resources to cultivate an employer brand
- Nearly 2X more likely to say diversity and inclusion metrics are one of the most effective ways to evaluate the employer brand
- Over 2X *less* likely to say lack of interest from leadership is a barrier to successful employer branding

How Successful Are Today's Employer Brands?

For the purpose of this report, large organizations have 1,000 or more employees, midsize organizations have 100 to 999 employees, and small organizations have 99 or fewer employees.

Finding: A majority say their employer brand is above average or excellent at enhancing the reputation of their organizations, but that's not true in other key HR-focused areas

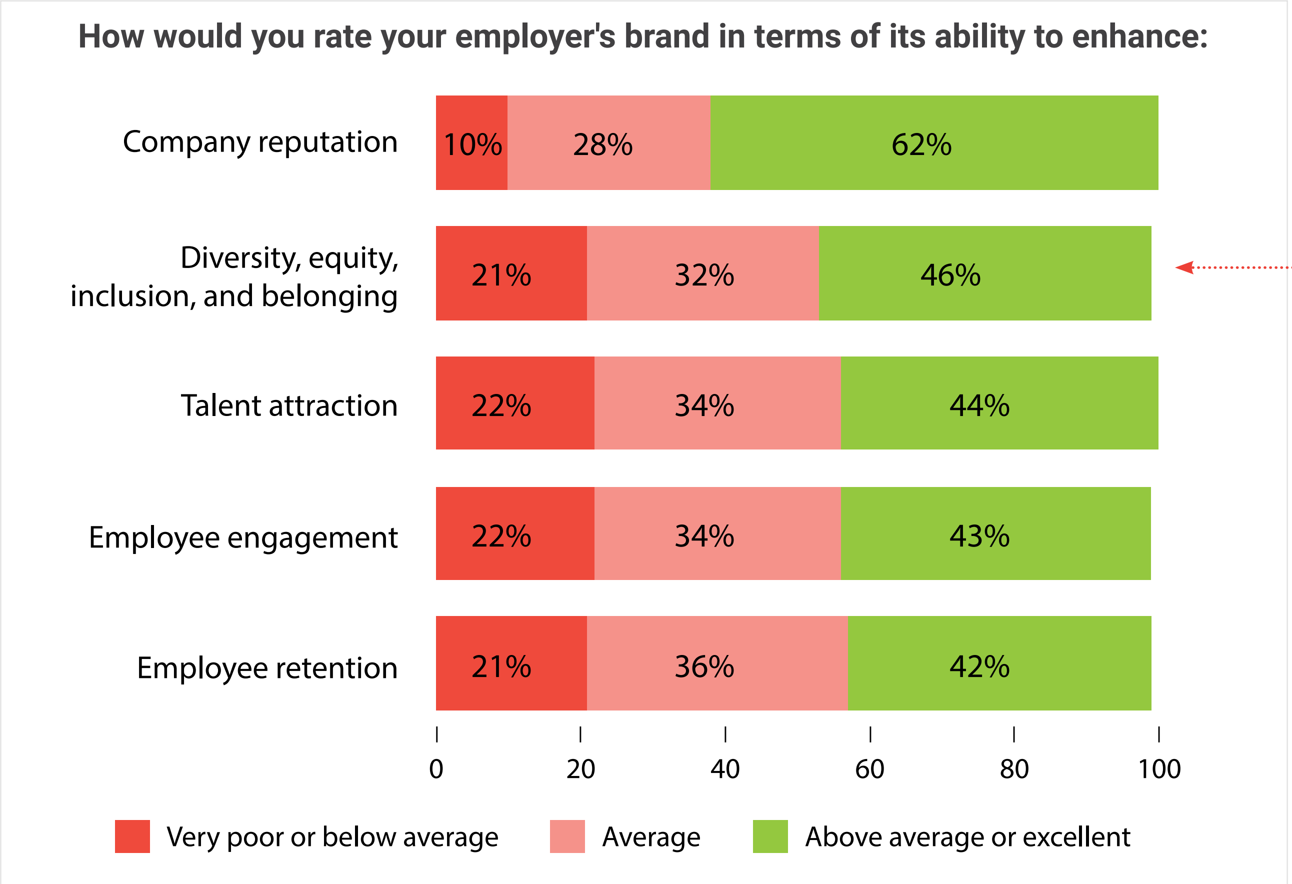
We asked respondents to rate their employer brand on its ability to improve five key HR areas. While 62% believe their employer brand is above average or excellent at enhancing company reputation, less than half believe the same to be true about the other key areas specifically related to talent managements:

- diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (46%)
- talent attraction (44%)
- employee engagement (43%)
- employee retention (42%)

The bottom line is that today's employer brands tend to be better at enhancing reputation than at doing more practical, HR-focused work. While this may please marketing professionals, whose business it is to burnish corporate brands, it should not please HR professionals to the same extent. What they need most are brands that help engage, attract, and retain great employees.

Differences by organizational size

When it comes to organizational size, midsize organizations (46%) are most likely to say their employer brand's ability to enhance employee engagement is above average or excellent. Small organizations (44%) follow closely behind. Those respondents in large organizations (32%) are much less likely to say their employer brand successfully enhances engagement.



Editor's Note: Not all bars add up to 100% due to rounding. Respondents who answered "don't know" (ranging between 1% and 3%) were removed from the data set.

46% say their employer brand is above average or excellent at enhancing DEIB

Branding-based cohorts

Throughout the rest of this report, we have segmented our responding organizations into two cohorts based on their ability to attract high-quality candidates through branding.

Well-branded organizations are those that report that their branding efforts are "above average" or "excellent" at attracting talent.

Less-branded organizations are those that report that their branding efforts are "average," "below average," or "very poor" at attracting talent.

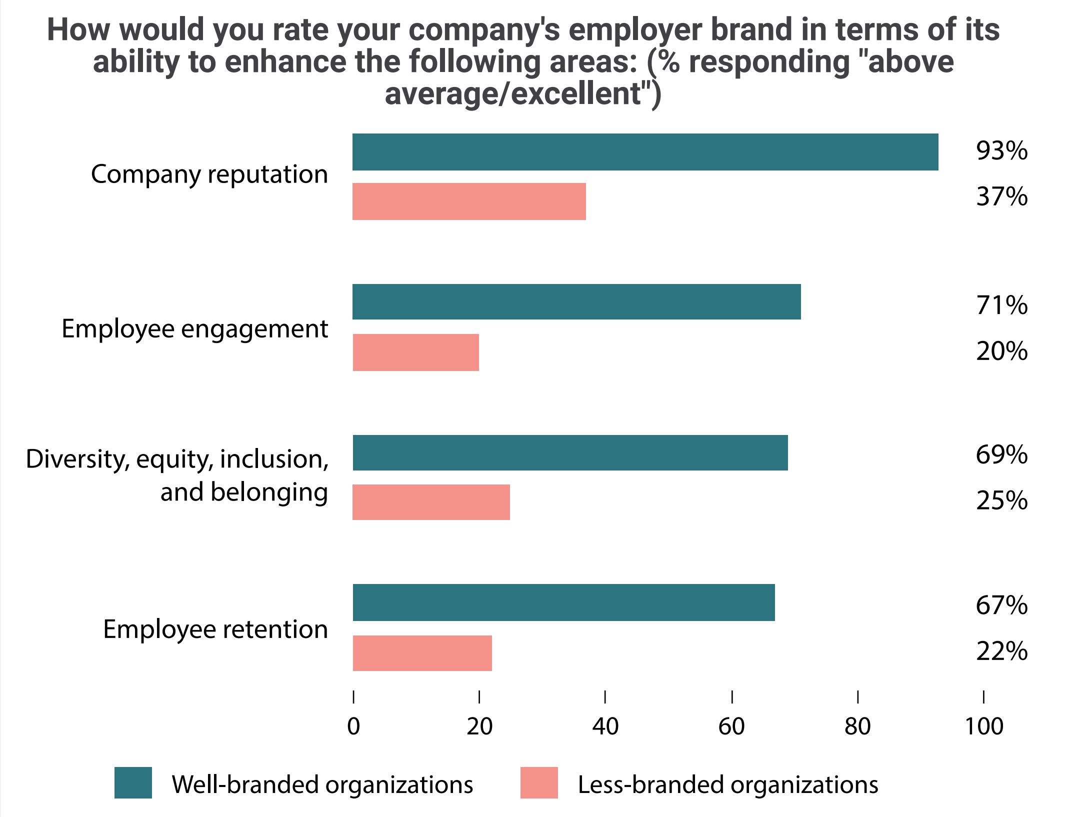
Correlation is not the same as causation, and we therefore cannot state that any particular practice has directly resulted in employer branding success. However, we did find that well-branded organizations share certain characteristics that suggest effective techniques for building and maintaining a successful employer brand.

Results of Chi-square test

A chi-square test of independence shows that well-branded organizations are significantly more likely than less-branded organizations to report above average/excellent impact of their employer brand on listed areas.

Finding: Well-branded organizations report a better impact of their brand on several organizational outcomes

Well-developed employer branding strategies of well-branded organizations (discussed below) have an above average/excellent impact on the company reputation, employee engagement, DEIB and employee retention. The less-branded organizations, in contrast, face challenges in these areas due to fragmented efforts and a lack of strategic alignment.



HRRI Strategic Recommendations

Based on our research, we have the following suggestions.

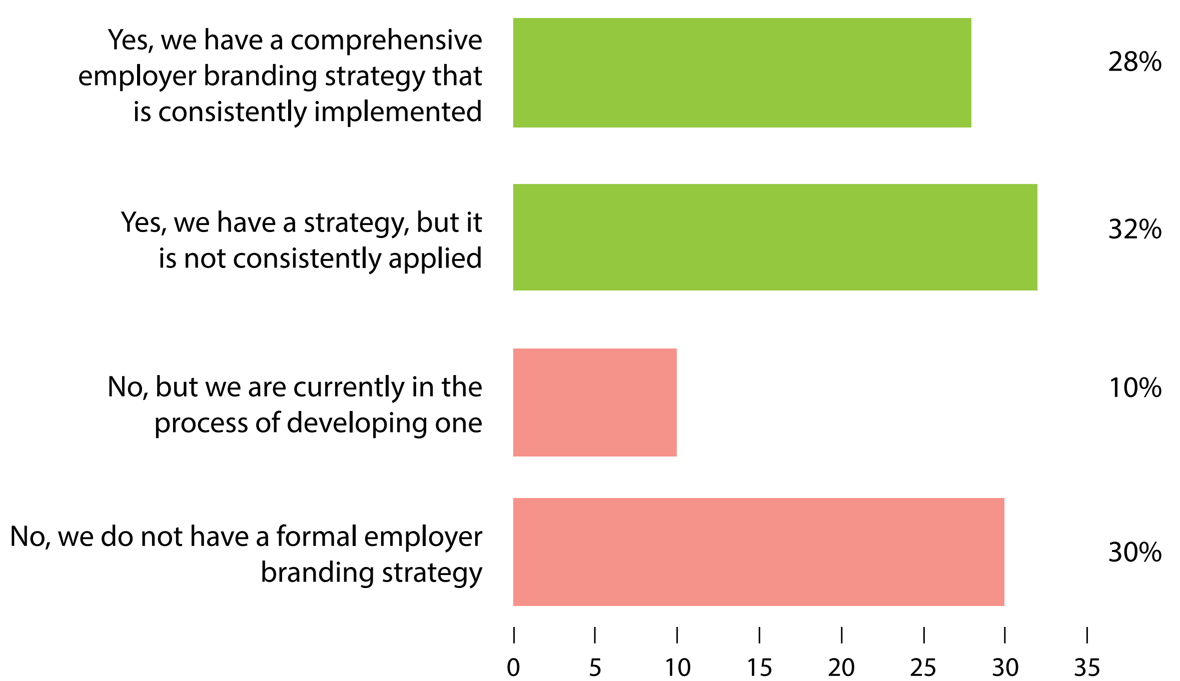
- Emphasize employer branding initiatives that directly influence employee engagement and retention, such as robust onboarding programs and ongoing recognition initiatives.
- Prioritize DEIB by aligning branding messages with inclusive organizational values and practices.
- Enhance candidate experiences through personalized communication and streamlined recruitment processes, leveraging technology when possible.
- Leverage consistent, high-quality messaging across digital platforms and employer review sites to improve perception among current and potential employees.

Finding: Six in 10 responding organizations have a formal employer branding strategy

It is difficult to cultivate an excellent employer brand without an effective strategy. The good news is that 60% of organizations have a formal employer brand strategy, and another 10% are in the process of developing one. The bad news, however, is only 28% of those who have a strategy say it is comprehensive and consistently applied. The rest either have inconsistently applied formal strategies or none at all.

Organizations that lack a consistently applied strategy may be this way because they place greater focus on the consumer brand rather than the employer brand. That is, some employers may think the consumer brand takes priority due to the perception that it has a more immediate return on investment compared to the employer brand, which can be harder to quantify. However, having a well-branded product/service doesn't necessarily translate into a great place to work. And, no matter how well a product is branded, its ultimate success will likely depend more on its quality, which rests on the quality of the workforce.

Does your organization have a formal employer branding strategy?



Editor's Note: Respondents who answered "don't know" were removed from the data set. These respondents represented 8% of respondents to this question.

30% don't have and are not in the process of developing a formal employer branding strategy

Results of Chi-square test

A chi-square test of independence shows that well-branded organizations are significantly more likely than less-branded organizations to have a comprehensive employer branding strategy that is consistently implemented.

Finding: Well-branded organizations are more likely than less-branded ones to have a formal employer branding strategy

Well-branded organizations demonstrate a stronger commitment to formalizing their employer branding efforts, which correlates with better outcomes. Forty-four percent of them report having a comprehensive and consistently implemented employer branding strategy, compared to only 12% of less-branded organizations. Further, only 14% of well-branded employers lack a formal strategy, compared to 38% of the less-branded ones.

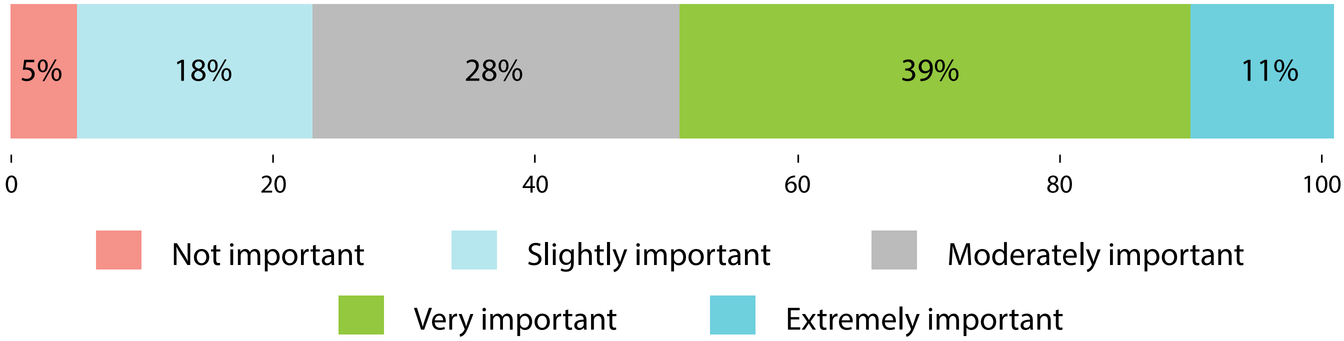
Finding: Over three-fourths of organizations recognize that employer branding is at least moderately important to HR's overall strategy

We know from the earlier finding that employer branding has the potential to enhance key areas such as company reputation, talent attraction, retention, employee engagement, and DEIB. So, it's a positive trend that 78% of organizations recognize that employer branding is at least moderately important to the overall HR strategy.

Organizations that view employer branding as important are more likely to be using it to align their workforce goals with broader organizational objectives. These organizations may experience benefits such as enhanced talent acquisition outcomes, stronger employee engagement, and a more cohesive workplace culture.

Conversely, the 23% who rate employer branding as "slightly" or "not at all" important may struggle to remain competitive in talent markets, potentially overlooking the long-term value of a strong employer brand.

How important is employer branding to your organization's overall HR strategy?



Editor's Note: Responses do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

5% believe employer branding is not important to the overall HR strategy

Results of Chi-square test

A chi-square test of independence shows that well-branded organizations are significantly more likely than less-branded organizations to say branding is very/extremely important to the organization's overall HR strategy.

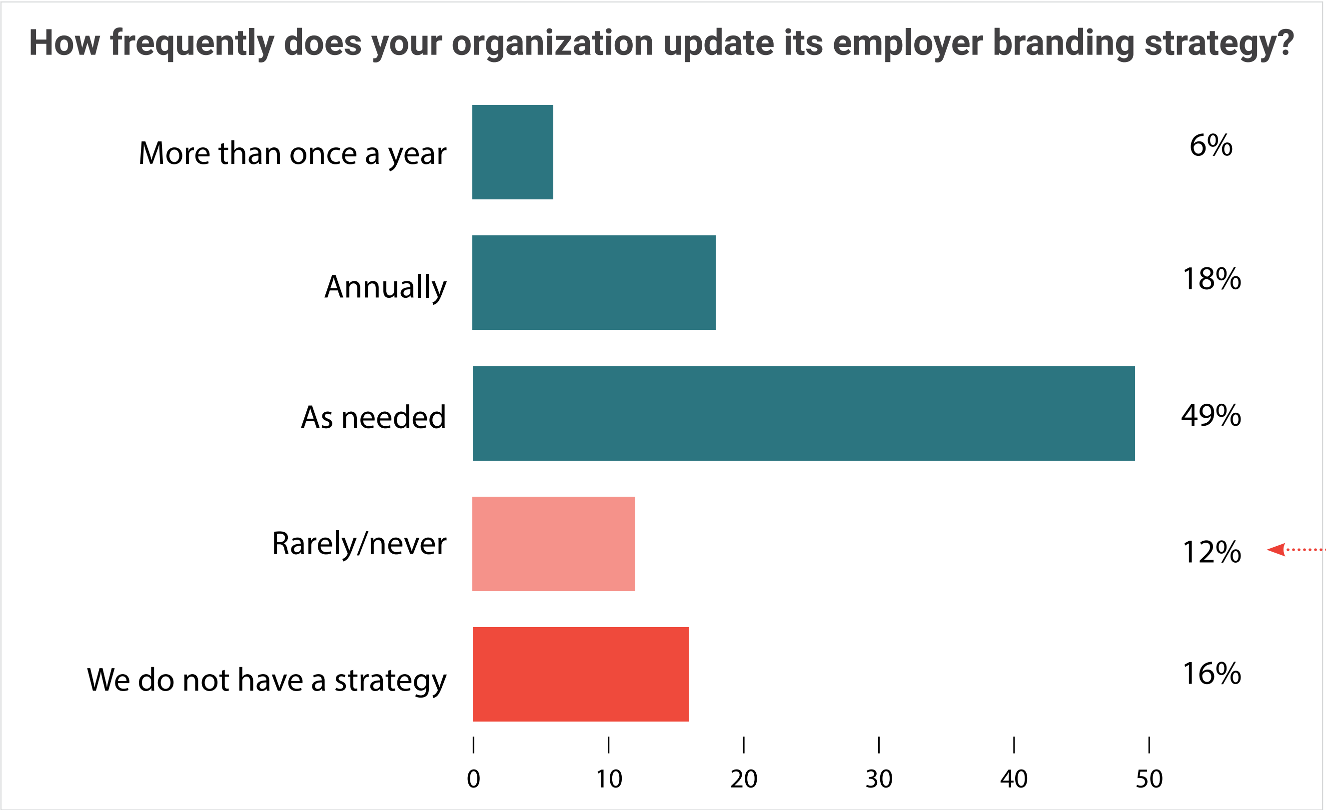
Finding: Well-branded organizations are more likely to place greater importance on employer branding strategy

Well-branded organizations are significantly more likely than less-branded ones to view employer branding as a critical aspect of their HR strategy (66% vs. 37%), highlighting a clear difference in prioritization. Well-branded companies consistently view employer branding as a critical part of their HR strategy, suggesting alignment between branding efforts and organizational goals. In contrast, the lower prioritization of less-branded organizations may hinder their ability to leverage employer branding effectively for talent attraction and retention.

Finding: Twenty-four percent of organizations update their employer branding strategy annually or more often than once a year

We asked respondents how frequently they update their employer branding strategy. Almost a quarter (24%) say they update their employer branding strategy annually or more frequently. Nearly half (49%) say they update their strategy as needed, reflecting a more reactive rather than proactive approach. While organizations should sometimes be more proactive, these trends reflect the reality that organizational needs can shift unexpectedly due to talent priorities, market trends, or other factors, making rigid annual plans difficult to sustain. Further, some employers may audit their employer branding initiatives more frequently but not necessarily change based on the circumstances.

Still, this leaves 27% of respondents who rarely or never update their strategy or lack one altogether. This is a concern, as employer brands must adapt to changing times to remain effective in attracting and retaining the right talent.



Editor's note: Responses don't add up to 100% due to rounding.

12% rarely/never update their employer branding strategy

HRRI Strategic Recommendations

Based on our research, we have the following suggestions.

- Educate decision-makers on the importance of formal strategies to ensure buy-in and resource allocation.
- Adjust the brand as necessary as business circumstances change, but also regularly review the employer brand to ensure it is fresh, compelling and up-to-date. Invest in creating formalized, actionable employer branding strategies with clear goals and measurable outcomes.
- Address gaps in strategy implementation through training, process documentation, and accountability measures.
- Develop targeted initiatives that demonstrate immediate ROI, such as enhancing visibility on employer review platforms or implementing quick wins in candidate engagement strategies.

Are Organizations Investing in Employer Brands?

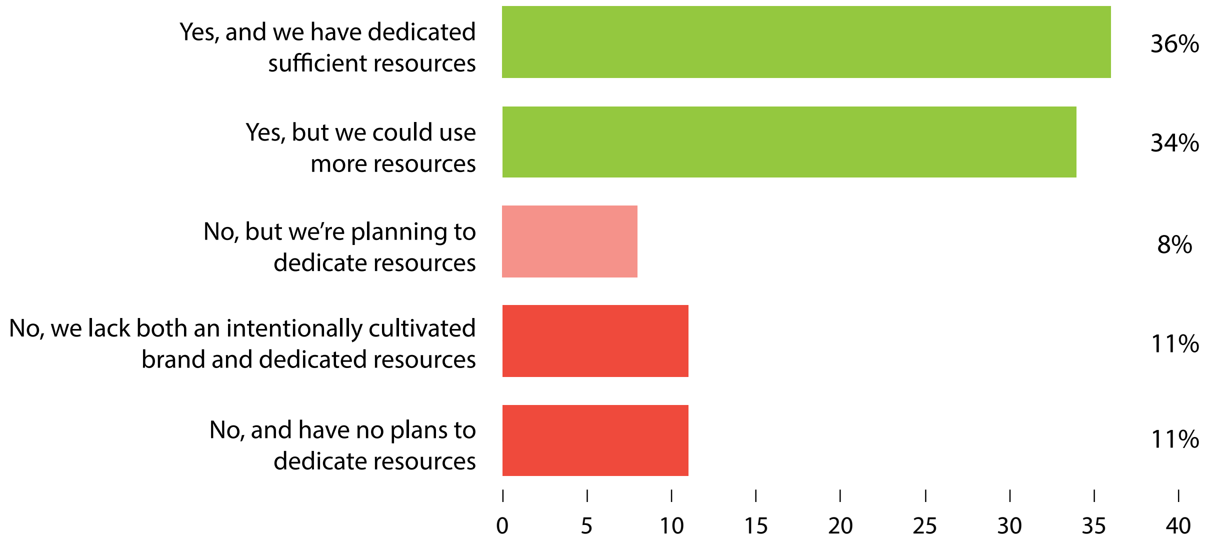
Finding: Only 36% of today's companies have dedicated sufficient resources to develop an intentionally cultivated employer brand

How can an organization effectively cultivate a robust employer brand? While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, having dedicated resources (such as budget, internal team, and external agency support) plays a crucial role.

Our data highlights a significant gap in employer branding maturity across organizations. While 36% of companies have sufficient resources to develop an intentionally cultivated brand, 34% say that they have dedicated resources to such a brand but that the resources are insufficient.

Meanwhile, 11% say they lack both an intentionally cultivated brand and resources dedicated to the development of that brand.

Does your organization dedicate resources (e.g., budget, internal team, external agency) to develop an intentionally cultivated employer brand?



Editor's note: Respondents who answered "don't know" were removed from the data set. These respondents represent 5% of the total data set.

Results of Chi-square test

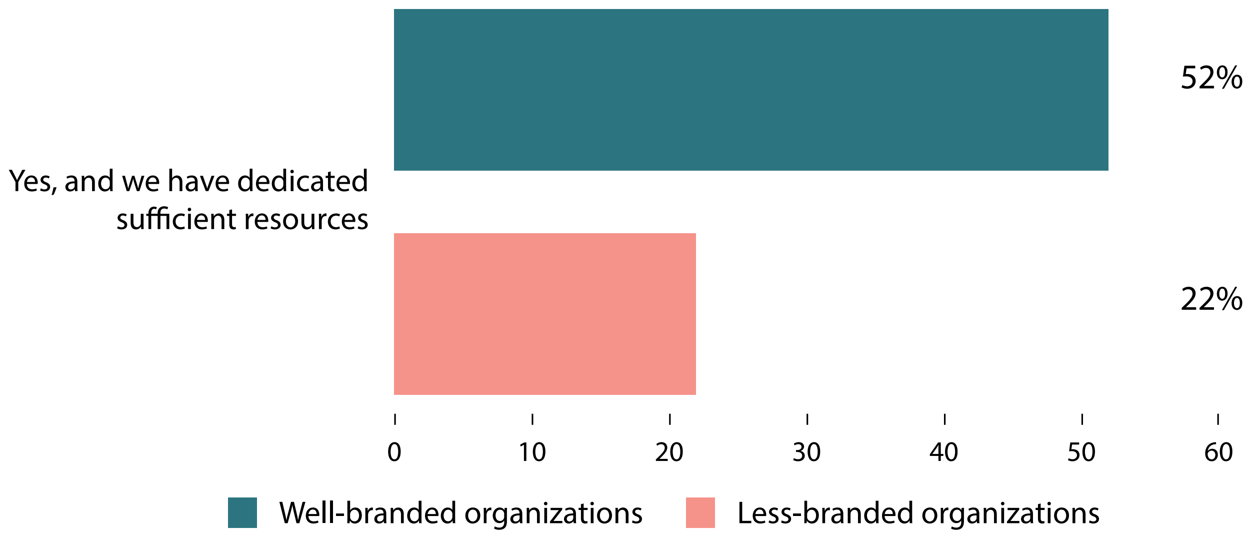
A chi-square test of independence shows that well-branded organizations are significantly more likely than less-branded organizations to say they have dedicated sufficient resources to employer branding efforts.

Finding: A little over half of well-branded employers dedicate sufficient resources to develop an intentionally cultivated employer brand

While a majority (82%) of well-branded organizations say they have dedicated resources to employer branding, only around half of such organizations believe these resources are sufficient. In contrast, just one-fifth of less-branded ones say the same.

The former's greater willingness to invest in resources suggests that these organizations recognize the importance of financial and human capital in building a strong employer brand. On the other hand, less-branded employers' reluctance to allocate resources may stem from a lack of awareness or prioritization of employer branding.

Does your organization dedicate resources (e.g., budget, internal team, external agency) to develop an intentionally cultivated employer brand?



HRRI Strategic Recommendations

Based on our research, we have the following suggestions.

- Develop resource-allocation plans that align with business goals.
- Encourage cross-departmental (such as between Marketing and HR) collaboration to optimize resource utilization by hosting joint strategy workshops, integrating branding metrics into shared dashboards, and establishing regular touchpoints for collaborative campaigns.

Finding: Almost half say their organization's employer branding budget has increased over the last two years

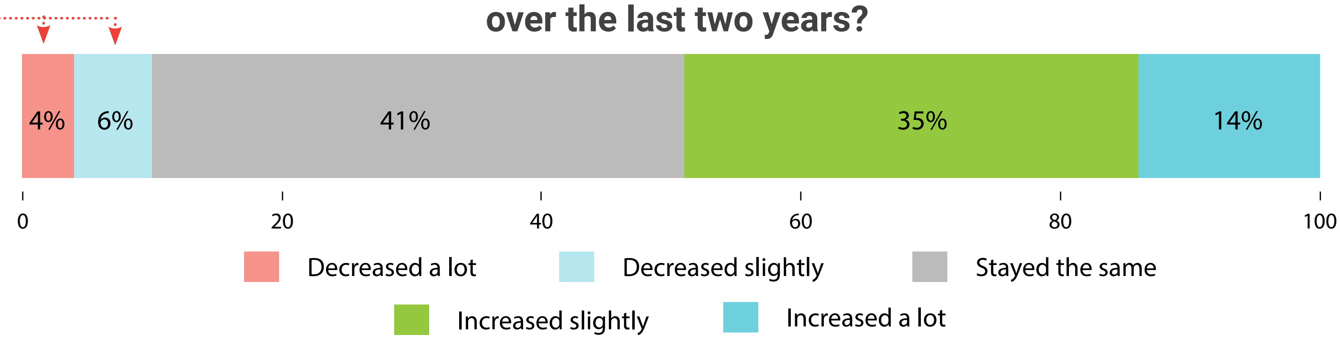
Of those organizations that have a budget for employer branding resources, 49% say their employer branding budget has increased slightly (35%) or a lot (14%) over the last two years. This trend likely reflects a growing awareness among employers of the importance of employer branding in attracting and retaining top talent. Companies recognize that a strong employer brand helps them secure candidates who have the right skills and fit well with their organizational culture.

A substantial share (41%) of organizations indicate that their employer branding budget has remained stable. This may be due to various factors, such as competing budgetary priorities. Additionally, some organizations may have already established a solid employer brand and feel that no immediate increase in investment is necessary.

However, staying stagnant in employer branding can be risky. As competitors evolve and enhance their own branding efforts, organizations that do not adapt may struggle to attract and retain talent.

Only 10% of companies with related budgets report a decrease in their employer branding budget. This small percentage suggests that most organizations understand the value of maintaining or increasing their investments in this area. However, budget cuts could stem from overall financial constraints or shifts in company strategy.

How has your organization's employer branding budget changed over the last two years?



10% of organizations have decreased their employer branding budget over the last two years

Barriers to Successful Employer Branding

Finding: There are various barriers related to successful brand creation

Insufficient personnel devoted to branding is the top barrier at 45%. Many (39%) also deal with insufficient financial resources. Three barriers are tied for third place at 35%, and they are:

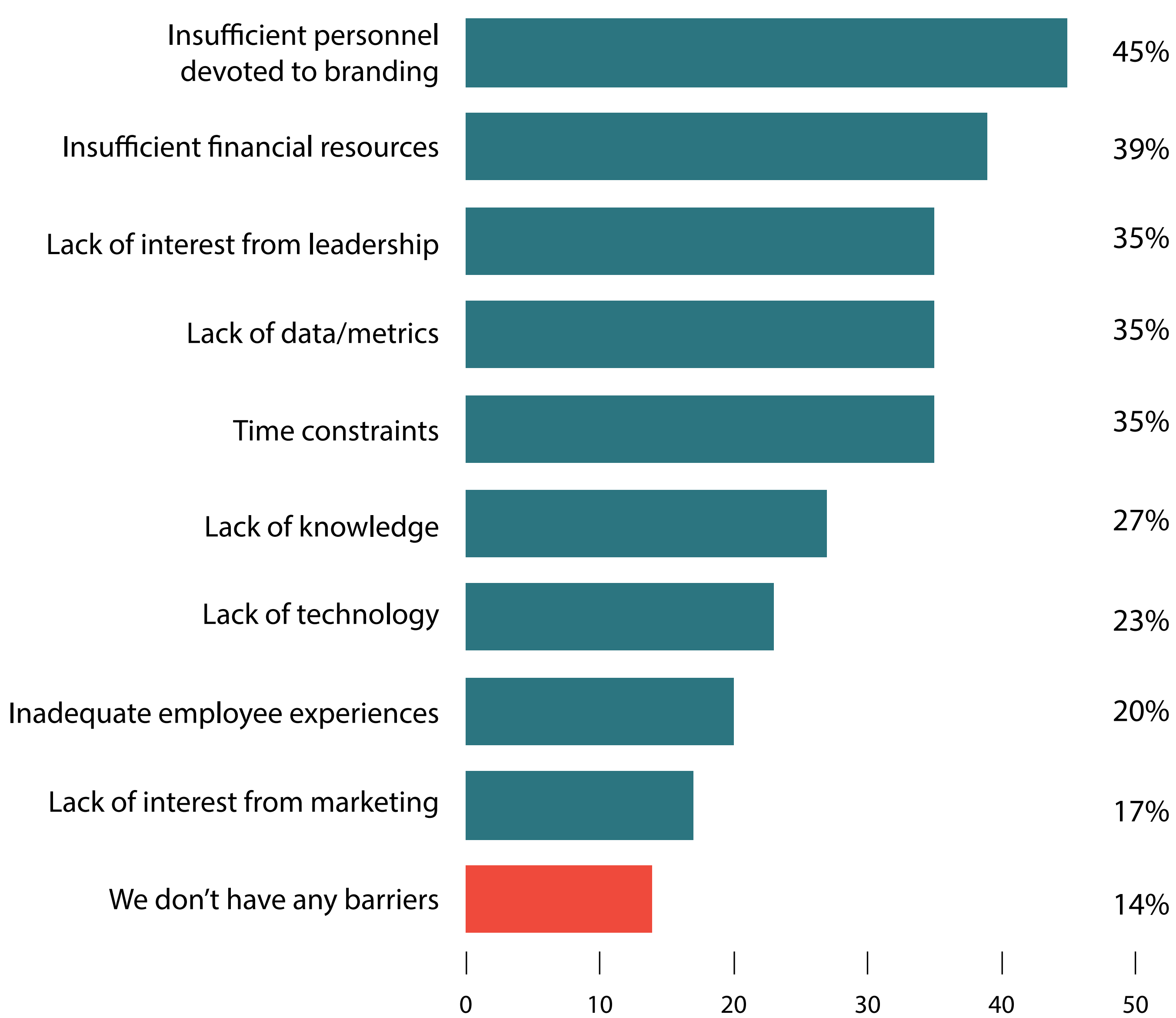
- lack of interest from leadership
- lack of data/metrics
- time constraints

This year's findings are similar to last year's top barriers: lack of financial resources, insufficient personnel, lack of time, lack of data/metrics, and lack of know-how about the topic. These barriers are often interlinked. For example, if an organization is struggling with a lack of interest from leadership, branding efforts are likely to have insufficient financial resources and insufficient personnel.

If organizations lack data/metrics, it becomes incredibly challenging for organizations to determine potential pain points in their strategy. Without robust analytics, organizations find it difficult to identify potential pain points in their strategy, measure the effectiveness of their efforts, or justify increased investment in employer branding. This data deficit can lead to inefficient resource allocation and missed opportunities for improvement.

Time constraints further compound these issues. With limited time to dedicate to employer branding, teams may struggle to develop comprehensive strategies, create engaging content, or analyze the results of their efforts. This can result in a superficial approach to employer branding that fails to resonate with potential candidates or current employees.

What are the barriers to successful employer brand creation in your organization? (select all that apply)



Editor's Note: Respondents who answered "don't know" were removed from the data set. These respondents represent 8% of the total data set.

Only 14% say they say they don't have any barriers

Results of Chi-square test

A chi-square test of independence shows that less-branded organizations are significantly more likely than well-branded organizations to say listed barriers impede successful brand management in their organizations.

Finding: Less-branded organizations face several challenges to successful brand management

Well-branded employers demonstrate greater organizational alignment and resource commitment, resulting in fewer barriers overall when compared to their less-branded counterparts. Large disparities exist in areas such as insufficient personnel (48% vs. 34%), lack of leadership interest (43% vs. 20%), and lack of knowledge (31% vs. 15%). These systemic gaps are hindering less-branded organizations in their branding efforts. Addressing these barriers could unlock significant potential for them to improve their employer branding.

What are the barriers to successful employer brand management in your organization?

Metrics Defining Employer Brand Success

Finding: Employee retention rates and employee engagement surveys are still perceived as the most effective ways to measure the employer brand

Which metrics best define employer brand success? We found there's no majority consensus. However, two options are tied for first place—45% of HR professionals believe employee retention rates and employee engagement surveys are the most effective. This is similar to last year, where employee engagement surveys took the top spot (41%) followed by retention rates (38%).

We can see why these are perceived as the most effective. Retention is one of the primary employer branding goals, and it's relatively easy to measure. Employee engagement is essential for retaining talent, and many organizations have a long history of measuring it.

One effective method for enhancing engagement is through employee engagement surveys. Our 2024 trends in engagement study, conducted in collaboration with WorkBuzz, found those with stronger engagement are two times more likely than those with weaker engagement to survey employees at least once a quarter. However, the key is to act on the feedback. Otherwise, employees will believe their feedback is falling on deaf ears, thereby leading to survey fatigue.

Candidate experience feedback (37%), social media analytics (31%), rating on employer review platforms (29%), and quality of hire (29%) round out the top five. Candidate experience feedback can be a good way to learn how employees perceive the employer brand. Do they believe that the projected employer brand properly reflects the actual experiences of employees?

Social media analytics can also offer useful data on engagement and brand perception, making it a cost-effective method for gathering insights. Platforms often provide businesses with tools to track performance and audience engagement. Similarly, employee review platforms provide insights into how employees and candidates view organizations. One study found that 84% of Americans consult online reviews before applying for jobs, so organizations need to monitor their presence on review platforms.

From the list below, choose the top five most effective ways that your organization evaluates and/or measures its employer brand? (select up to five)

Editor's Note: Respondents who answered "don't know" were removed from the data set. These respondents represented 9% of the total data set.

About a quarter don't evaluate or measure their employer brand at all!

Results of Chi-square test

A chi-square test of independence shows that well-branded organizations are significantly more likely than less-branded organizations to use the listed metrics to evaluate and/or measure their employer brand.

Finding: Well-branded organizations are considerably more likely to use several methods to evaluate and/or measure their employer brand

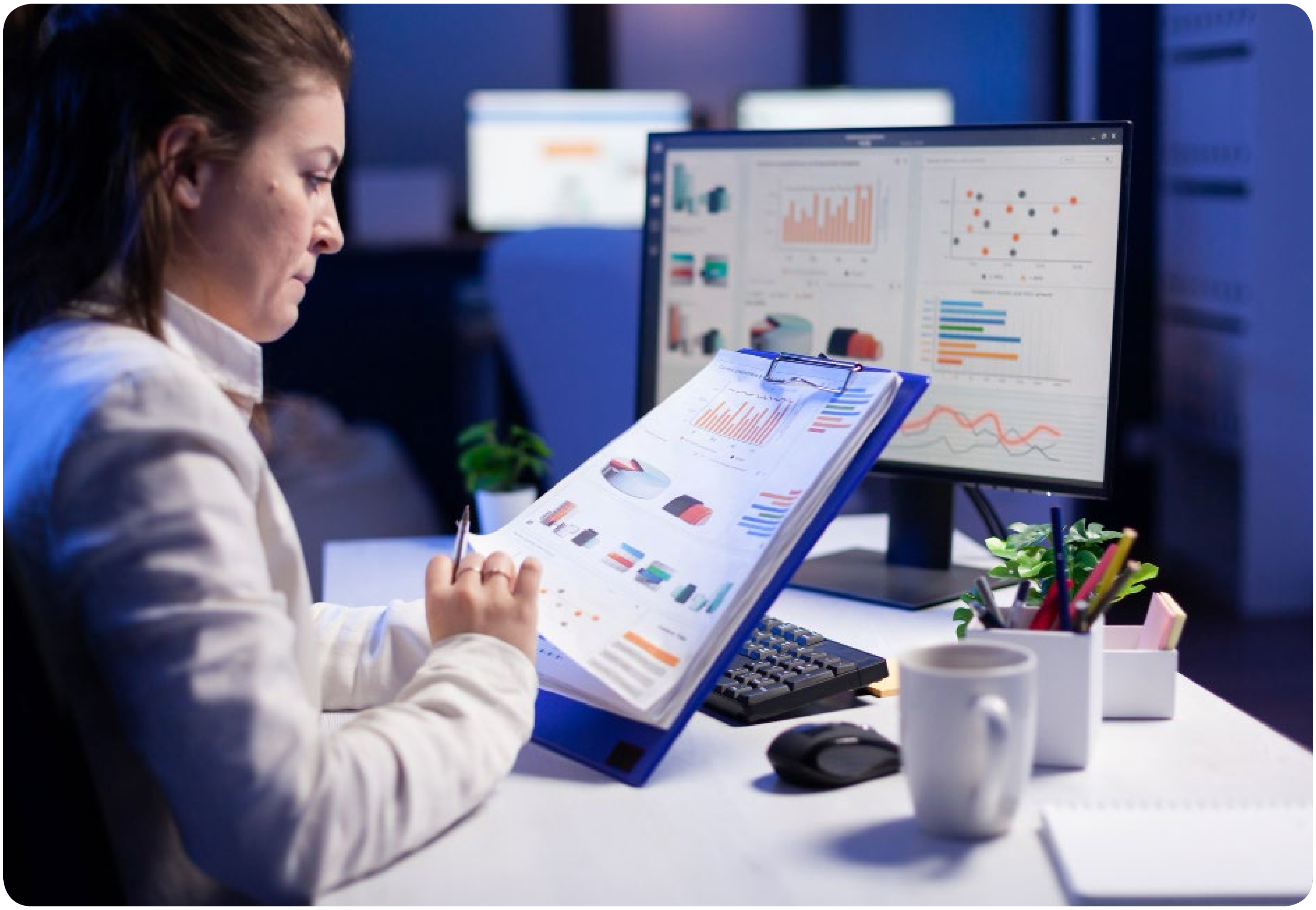
Well-branded organizations demonstrate their commitment to data-driven employer branding strategies with broader adoption of diverse evaluation methods. They are more likely than less-branded ones to use metrics such as employee retention rates (51% vs. 33%) to fine-tune their employer branding efforts and align them with organizational goals. Meanwhile, less-branded organizations are over twice as likely to say they do not measure or evaluate their brand at all.

From the list below, choose the most effective ways that your organization evaluates and/or measures its employer brand?

HRRI Strategic Recommendations

Based on our research, we have the following suggestions.

- If just starting out, provide training and tools to start basic measurements of the employer brand.
- Adopt foundational metrics such as retention rates and engagement surveys to gain actionable insights.
- Where possible, demonstrate the ROI of branding initiatives to secure broader organizational support.
- Promote the use of social media analytics, diversity metrics, and offer acceptance rates to provide a holistic view of branding effectiveness.
- Allocate resources to hire or upskill dedicated branding staff to address gaps in knowledge and expertise.
- Provide stakeholders with affordable, scalable tools to support branding efforts.



Who is Responsible for Employer Branding?

Finding: Responsibility for employer branding most commonly falls on Marketing and HR

Marketing (28%) and HR (25%) are seen as most responsible for overall employer branding strategy. Marketing brings brand-building and communication skills, while HR shares insights into employee needs and workplace culture.

Another 16% believe senior leadership is most responsible. Senior leaders should be champions of the employer brand. If they can't effectively communicate the brand identity, it's unlikely that employees or prospective candidates are going to have a clear idea of the employer brand.

Similarly, 15% say the communications/public relations department is primarily responsible for their organization's overall employer branding strategy. Public relations tend to manage the perceived image of a company, especially in larger organizations.

The implications of Marketing taking the lead role

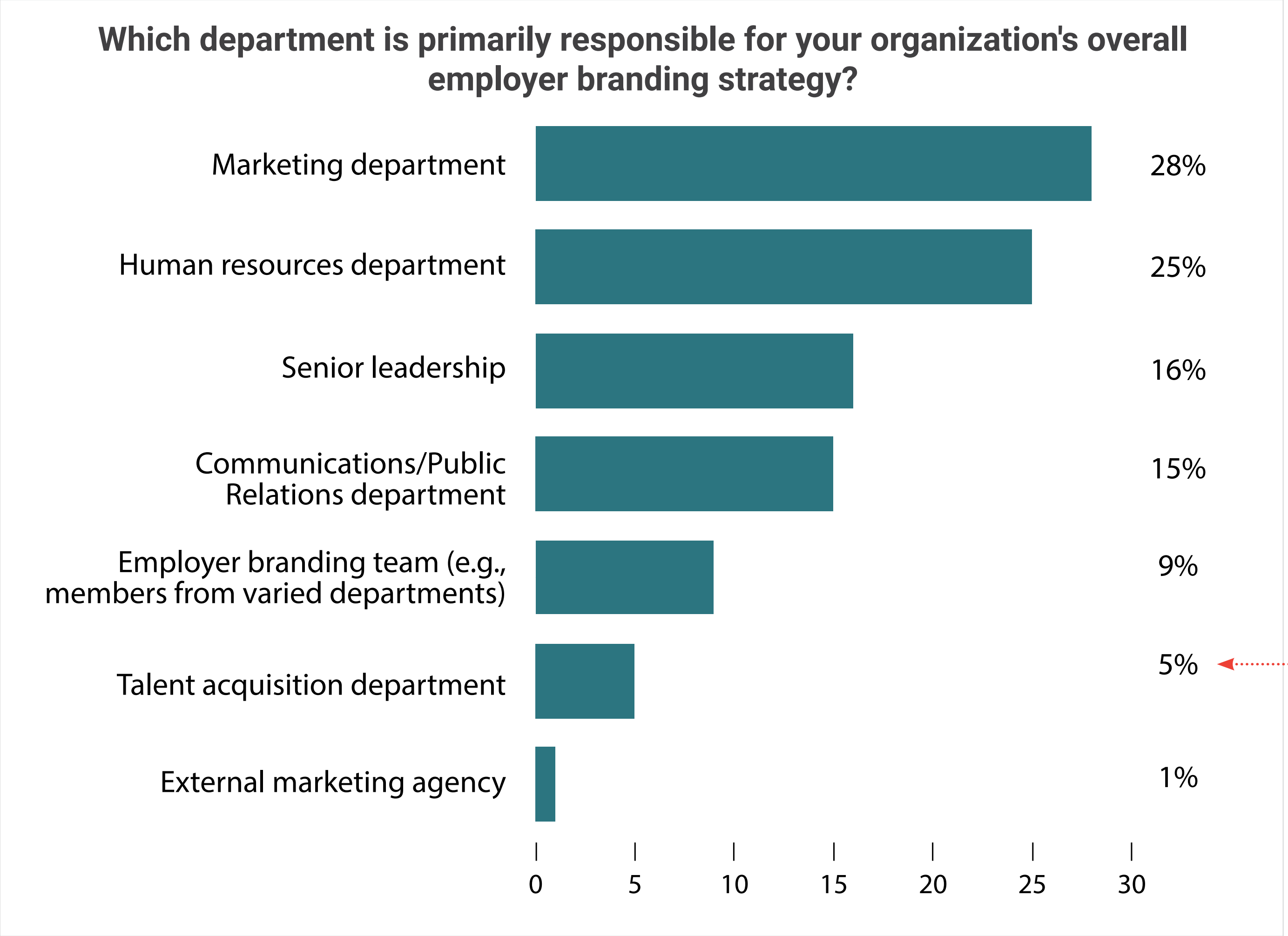
Earlier in the report, we found that organizations are more likely to rate their employer brand highly in the area of reputation than in the areas most strongly linked to talent management, such as employee attraction, retention, and engagement.

There's a disconnect here. Why does the employer brand tend to perform less well in the areas that are most important to HR and, by the way, most likely to serve as metrics?

The responses to this question about primary responsibility provide a clue. That is, because the Marketing and PR departments are more likely to be held responsible for the employer brand (collectively, 43%) than HR (25%) is, there's more likely to be an emphasis on reputation rather than on talent management. Of course, reputation also influences areas such as recruitment and retention, so the boundaries blur. Still, the fact that HR—or even a team that includes HR—often does not have the primary responsibility for the employer brand may help explain why employer brands underperform on key HR metrics.

Differences by organizational size

When looking at organizational size, those in small organizations are most likely to say HR is primarily responsible for employer branding. Those in midsize organizations are most likely to place primary responsibility on the Marketing department. Large organizations tend to place Communications/Public Relations in charge of employer branding.



Editor's Note: Respondents who answered "don't know" were removed from the data set. These respondents represent 4% of the total data set.

Just 5% place the primary responsibility for employer branding on the talent acquisition department

Top Sources for Attracting Potential Employees

Finding: Three-quarters of organizations use job ads to attract prospective employees

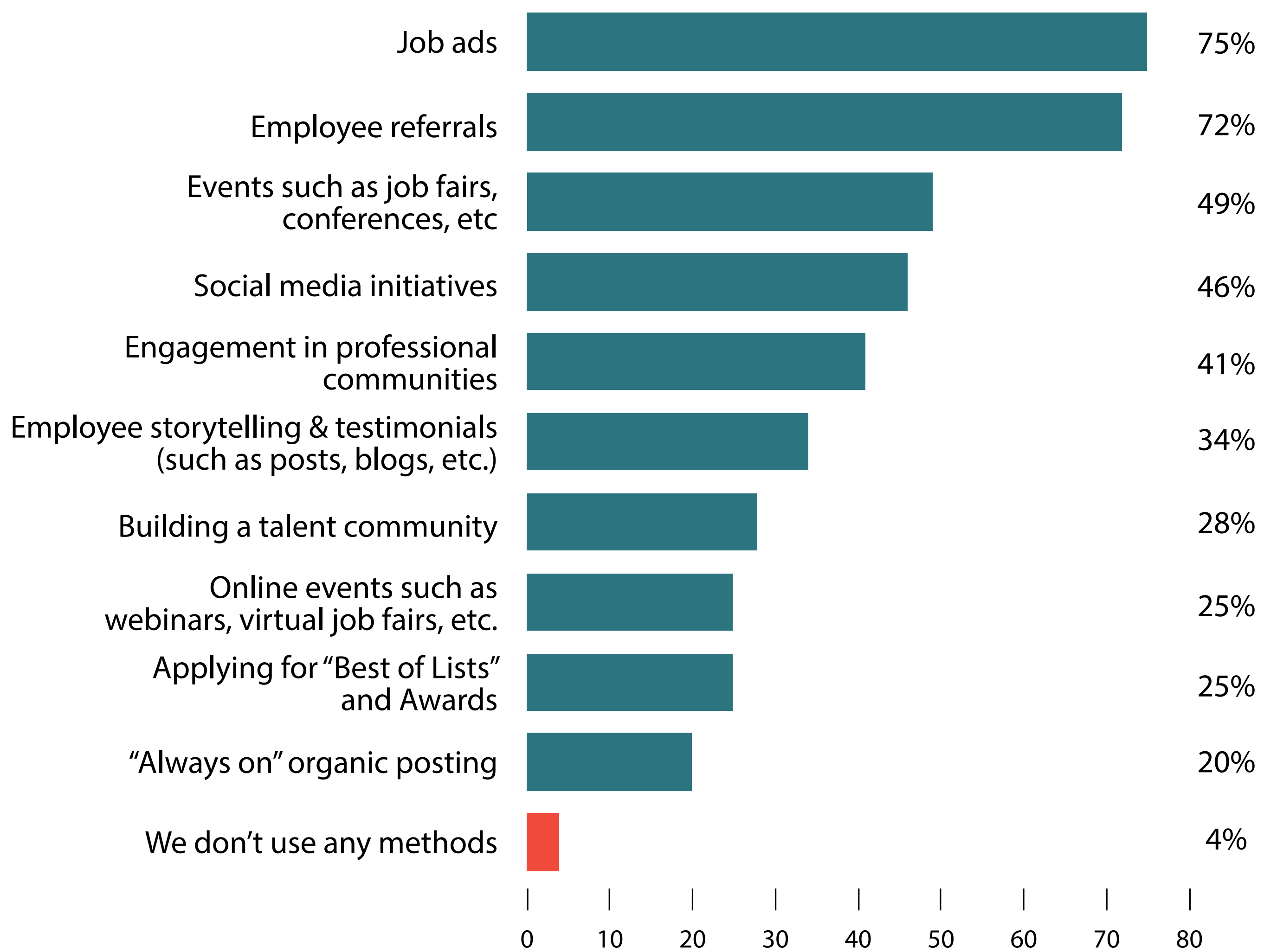
Attracting prospective employees is a key goal of employer branding, and job ads (75%) are among the primary methods for leveraging the brand. Sixty-five million users are searching for jobs through LinkedIn alone, not to mention the millions on Indeed and other more niche job boards. If organizations can perfect their job ads, they are far more likely to get candidates who are the right cultural fit.

Employee referrals (72%) are the next most popular method of attracting prospective employees. Employee referrals can be a great way to boost retention, reduce hiring costs, and save valuable time. For example, according to LinkedIn, it takes 29 days to hire a referred candidate compared to 55 days for most other hiring methods. Additionally, it's important to consider the relationship between the employee and the candidate being referred.

HBR research found that the strength of this relationship between the referrer and the candidate correlates with the quality of hire. That is, candidates with a strong personal relationship were nearly three times more likely to result in a good hire than candidates who were only online connections with the referrer. In fact, the online connections were no more likely to result in a good hire than people who weren't referred at all.

Nearly half (49%) use events such as job fairs, conferences, etc. Job fairs and conferences can seem outdated on the surface. However, they can be great opportunities to help candidates experience the atmosphere of the workplace, interact with current employees, and get a genuine feel for the organization's values and environment.

What methods does your organization use to attract prospective employees? (select all that apply)



41% engage in professional communities to attract talent

Results of Chi-square test

A chi-square test of independence shows that well-branded organizations are significantly more likely than less-branded organizations to use the listed methods to attract prospective employees.

Finding: Well-branded organizations rely on several methods to attract prospective candidates

Well-branded organizations use broader and more innovative talent attraction methods such as social media initiatives (55% vs. 39%), employee storytelling and testimonials (49% vs. 23%), building a talent community (44% vs. 17%), and online events such as webinars, virtual job fairs, etc. (36% vs. 18%). This reflects a strategic, multi-channel approach to talent acquisition.

What methods does your organization use to attract prospective employees?

HRRI Strategic Recommendations

Based on our research, we have the following suggestions.

- Promote the use of employee testimonials and success stories to humanize the employer brand and attract top talent.
- Provide resources and guidance to help develop and maintain active talent communities for long-term engagement.
- Introduce less traditional but effective strategies such as online events and awards submissions to diversify recruitment efforts.

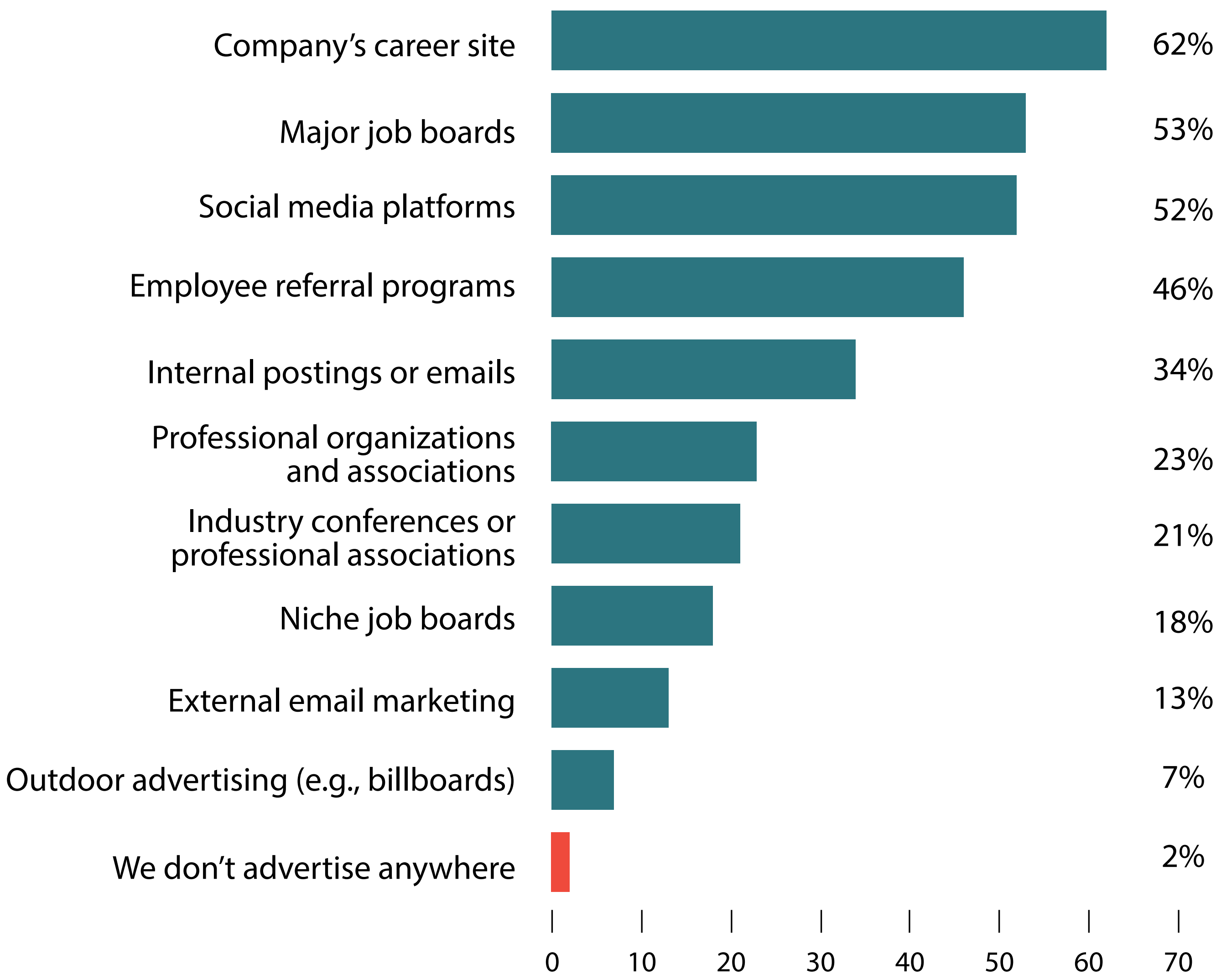
Finding: Organizations' websites are the most widely used channel for advertising new jobs

The majority (62%) say their company's career site is most successful in communicating their employer brand. This high percentage reflects the considerable effort organizations put into ensuring their career websites genuinely represent who they are. These sites often serve as the first impression for potential candidates, providing insights into the company's mission, values, and work environment.

Major job boards are also seen to be successful by just over half of respondents (53%). Job boards are likely successful because these platforms allow companies to reach a broad audience and showcase job opportunities to a diverse range of candidates. Similarly, social media platforms (52%) enable real-time engagement and allow organizations to showcase their employer brand through dynamic content like videos, testimonials, and employee stories.

Further, 46% say employee referral programs are the most successful for communicating the employer brand. When employees are engaged and satisfied with their jobs, they tend to share positive experiences with others and are more likely to recommend the company to potential candidates.

Which channels or platforms are most successful in communicating your employer brand to potential candidates? (select all that apply)



18% say niche job boards are successful in communicating their employer brand

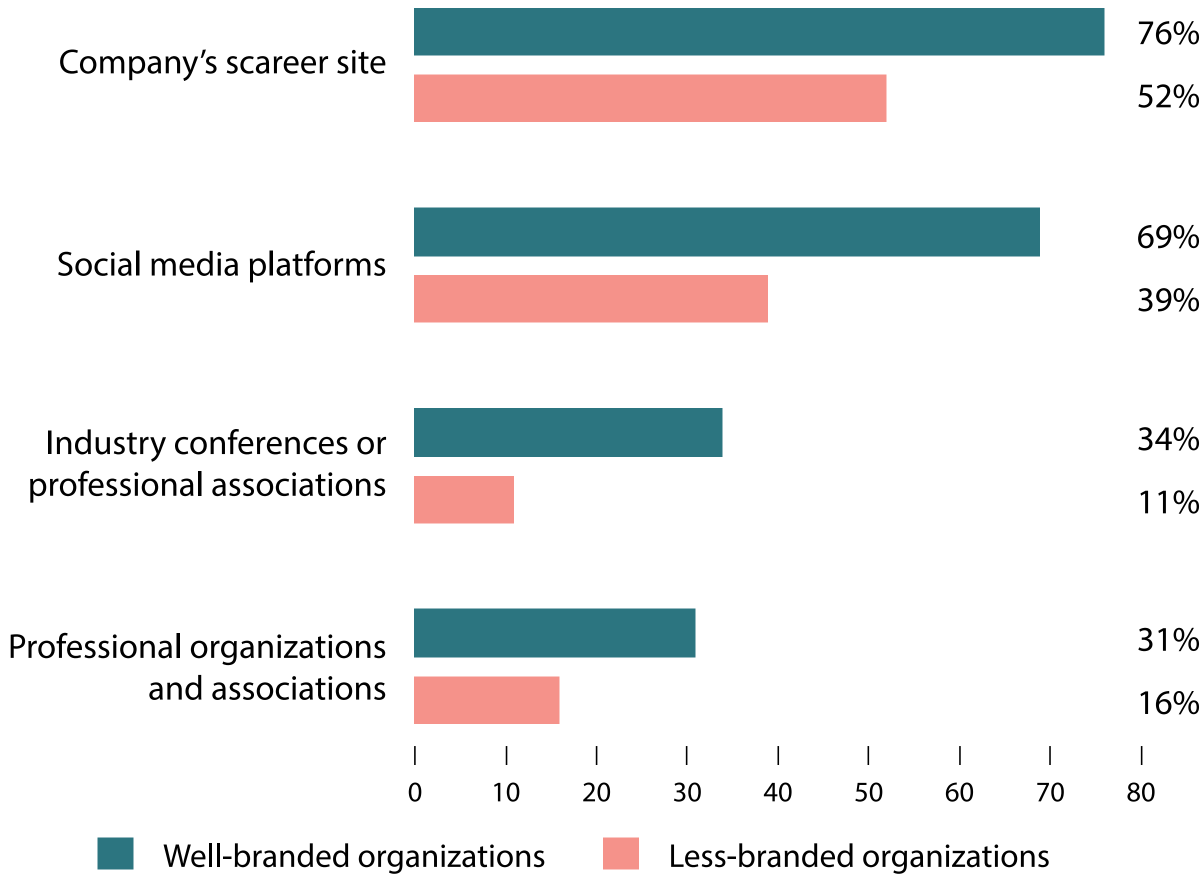
Results of Chi-square test

A chi-square test of independence shows that well-branded organizations are significantly more likely than less-branded organizations use listed channels/platforms to communicate employer brand to potential candidates.

Finding: Well-branded organizations leverage several channels/platforms to successfully communicate employer brand to potential candidates

Well-branded companies are more likely to use diverse communication channels such as career sites, social media, and industry events when compared to less-branded ones. This highlights their commitment to multi-faceted branding strategies and a proactive approach to connecting with talent across various touchpoints. Less-branded organizations tend to focus more on traditional methods, missing opportunities to amplify their employer brand through modern and innovative platforms.

Which channels or platforms are most successful in communicating your employer brand to potential candidates?



HRRI Strategic Recommendations

Based on our research, we have the following suggestions.

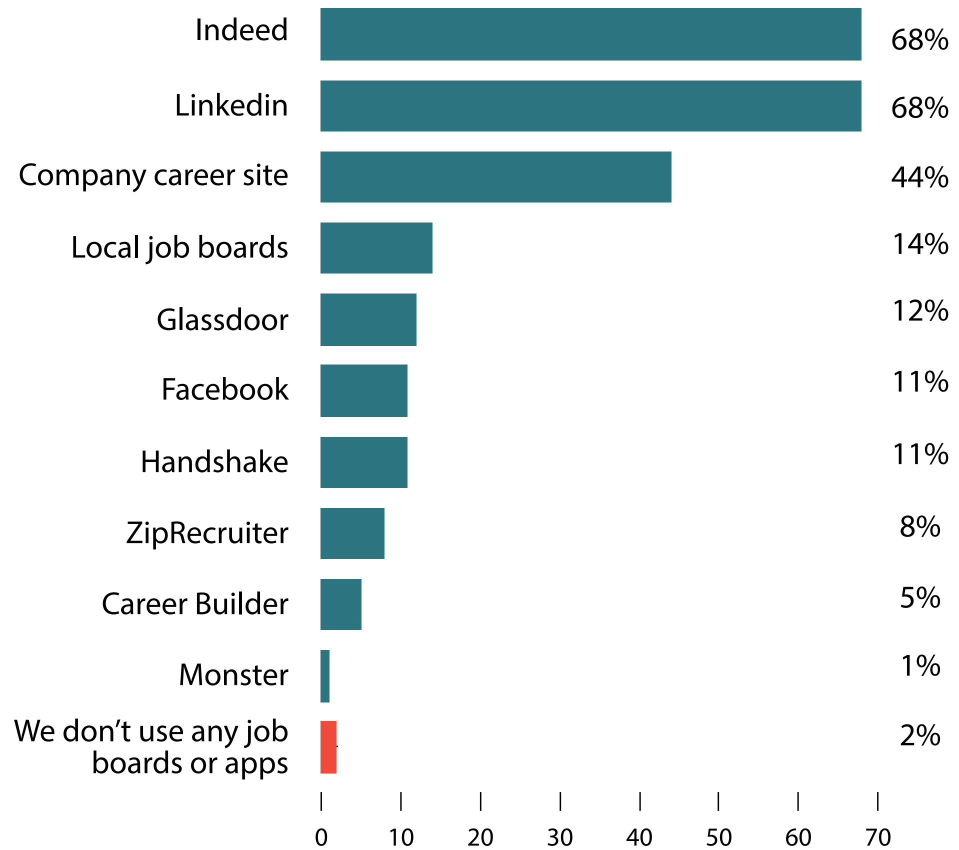
- Encourage your organization to enhance its career sites with engaging content, employee testimonials, and easy-to-navigate job listings.
- Provide training and tools to help build and maintain active social media campaigns tailored to target audiences.
- Promote the use of industry events, professional associations, and niche job boards to expand reach among specialized talent pools.
- Introduce underutilized methods such as external email marketing and outdoor advertising to increase visibility and engagement with potential candidates.

Finding: New hires are still most likely to come from Indeed and LinkedIn

Of those organizations that advertise, the top sources of hires are Indeed and LinkedIn, both at 68%. These sources were also the top two sources of hire last year, suggesting candidates are sticking to tried-and-true job board aggregators. Organizations should maintain a strong presence on these platforms to tap into a broad and active talent pool.

Many (44%) say the top source of hire is their company career site, perhaps reflecting candidates' preference for organizations whose employer brand aligns with their values. As mentioned earlier, career sites excel at effectively communicating employer branding, and, when done well, they attract candidates who are genuinely invested in joining the company.

Which three job boards or apps are the top sources of your hires? (select up to three)



Just 14% say local job boards are a top source of hire

What Does the Future Have in Store?

Finding: Forty-eight percent of respondents believe the focus on employee well-being will shape employer branding strategy in the next two years

Which trends will impact employer branding in the near future? First and foremost, nearly half (48%) of respondents believe a focus on employee well-being will shape employer branding strategy in the next two years. If organizations can craft a strong well-being program, they are more likely to have employer branding success. In fact, our 2024 study on the future of employee well-being found that those with highly effective well-being practices are much more likely to have greater engagement, increased talent attraction, and improved retention.

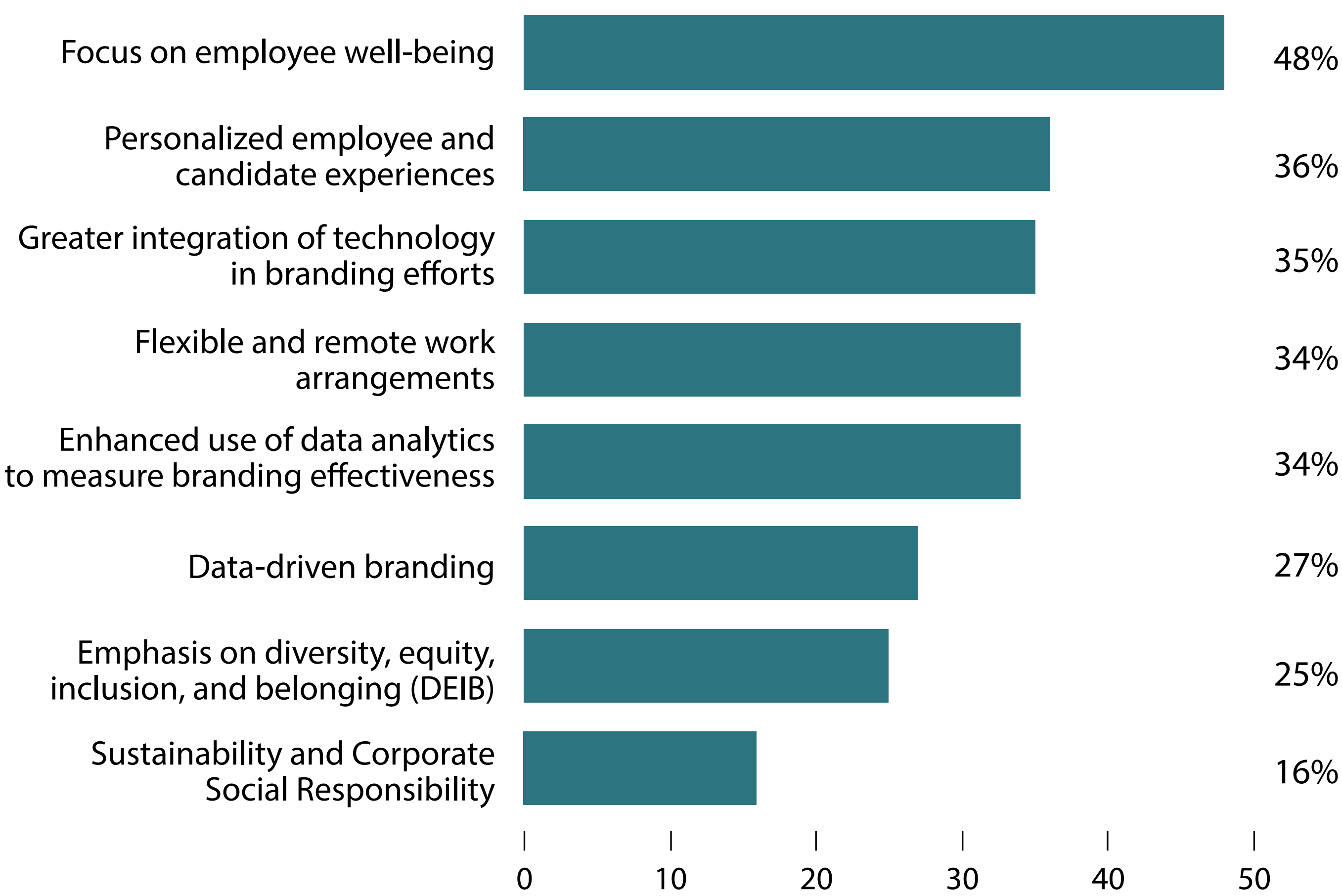
Personalized employee and candidate experiences (36%) will also likely shape employer branding in the near future. When a candidate has a bad experience with an organization, it can cause negative repercussions beyond that individual. A PwC study found 56% of candidates would discourage others from applying if they had a bad recruitment experience. Organizations should, however, strive to ensure employees and candidates have a great experience, as these individuals are likely to speak positively of the organization, thereby helping with talent attraction.

Similarly, 35% believe in greater integration of technology in branding efforts. These technologies will help organizations gain analytical insights into what their competitors are doing, how their employer brand is being perceived by competitors, and future trends that will help them shape their branding strategies in the future.

Differences by organizational size

Those in large organizations most commonly believe enhanced use of data analytics to measure branding (46%) will shape their employer branding strategy, compared to just 23% of mid-size organizations and 22% of small organizations. Those in small and midsize organizations most frequently say employee well-being will shape their employer branding strategy over the next two years.

What trends do you believe will shape your employer branding strategy in the next two years? (select up to three)



Editor's note: Respondents who answered "don't know" were removed from the data set. These respondents represent 13% of the total data set.

A quarter believe emphasis on DEIB will shape their branding strategy in the future

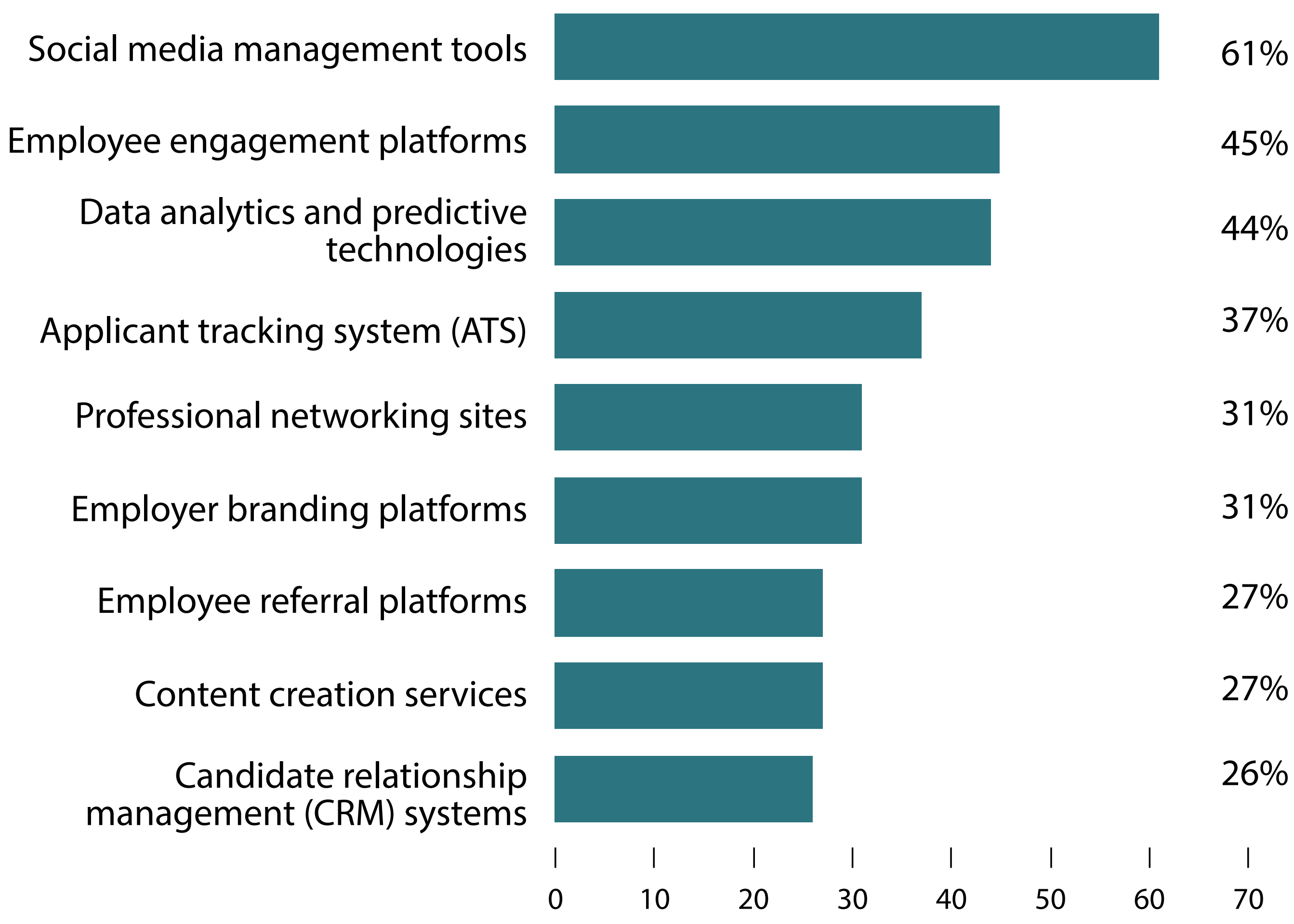
Finding: Social media management tools are most likely to become important over the next two years

We asked respondents to indicate which technologies and services will become most important to employer branding over the next two years. Social media management tools (61%) were chosen as the most important by far. Having a strong social media presence is needed for a successful brand, whether it be the consumer or employer brand. However, having an active social media presence can be time-consuming. Social media management tools can save those responsible for branding time by scheduling posts, monitoring keywords, and analyzing social media performance.

Many respondents (45%) also believe employee engagement platforms will be important to employer branding in the near future. Employee engagement is a key element in cultivating a strong employer brand. However, our 2024 research on the state of employee productivity and engagement found only 26% of organizations say their average employee is highly engaged (that is, at least an eight on a 10-point scale). Employee engagement platforms can create insights that help build better employee experiences.

Rounding out the top three is data analytics and predictive technologies (44%). There's no guarantee of how a company's employer brand will change in the future, but data analytics and predictive technologies can help organizations detect and foresee changes, giving them advantages in maintaining strong employer brands.

Which five of the following technologies and services will become most important to employer branding in your organization over the next two years? (select up to five)



Editor's Note: Respondents who answered "don't know" were removed from the data set. These respondents represented 8% of the total data set.

31% believe professional networking sites will become important over the next two years

Finding: AI is expected to influence employer branding in a variety of ways over the next two years

We asked respondents how they expect AI to influence employer branding over the next two years. The most common response was improved targeting and sourcing of candidates (41%), followed by personalized candidate experiences (36%). AI can streamline job board research and suggest optimized language that organizations might not have considered, helping attract the right talent. Additionally, AI provides hiring managers with valuable insights to enhance candidate experiences by analyzing applications and professional social media profiles, such as LinkedIn.

Just over a third (34%) believe AI will help automate recruitment processes, provide enhanced analytics for brand management, and enable AI-driven content creation. By leveraging these capabilities, organizations can refine their messaging, optimize recruitment workflows, and produce consistent, high-quality branded content tailored to attract the right talent.

How do you expect artificial intelligence (AI) to influence employer branding in the next two years? (select all that apply) Enable or provide:

27% don't know how AI will influence employer branding

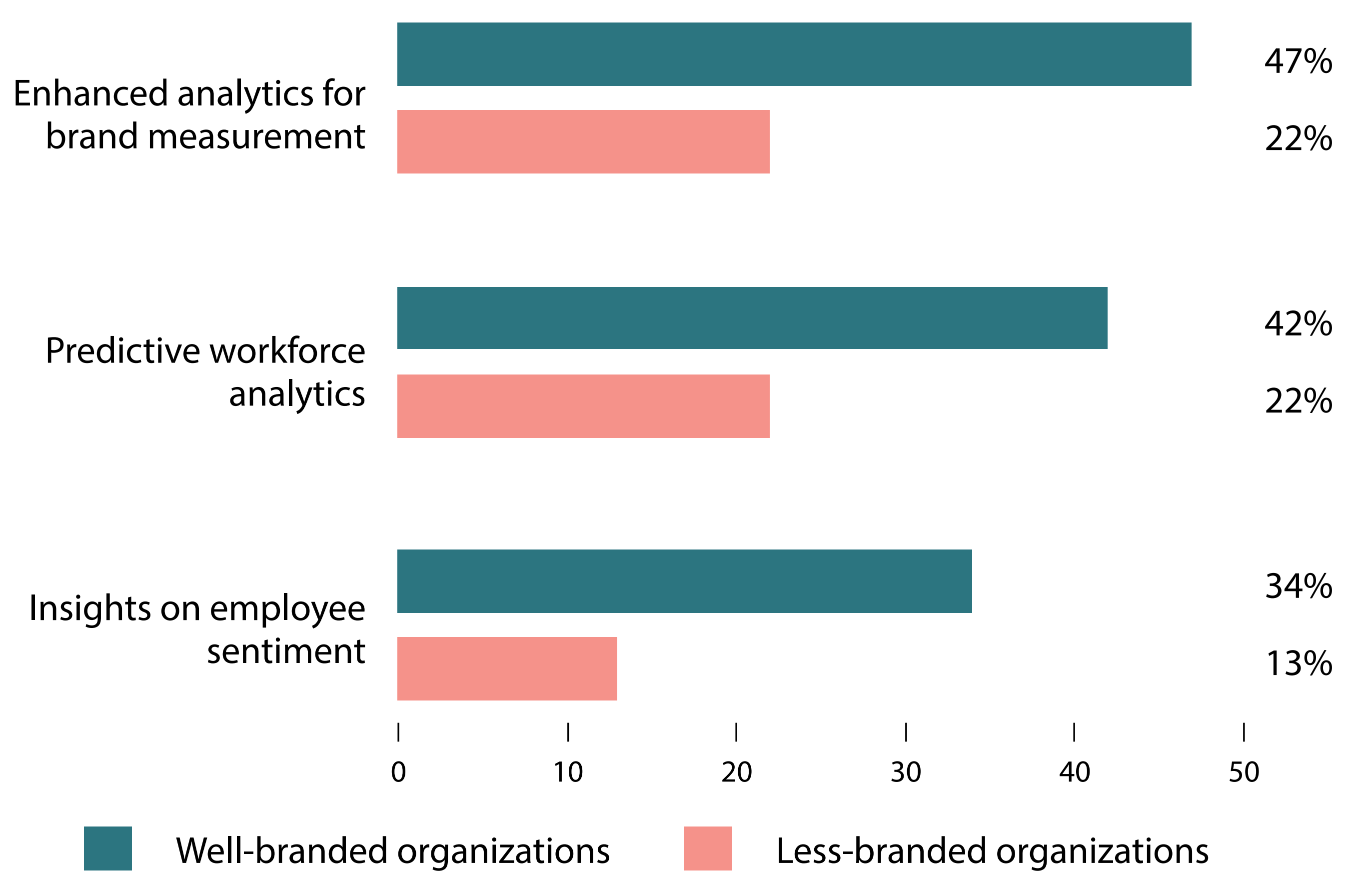
Results of Chi-square test

A chi-square test of independence shows that well-branded organizations are significantly more likely than less-branded organizations to say they expect AI to influence listed employer branding areas over the next two years.

Finding: Well-branded organizations are more likely to leverage AI for employer branding in the near future

Well-branded organizations are more likely than less-branded organizations to anticipate using AI to enhance strategic areas such as enhanced analytics (47% vs. 22%), predictive workforce analytics (42% vs. 22%), and insights on employee sentiment (34% vs. 13%). This suggests a greater confidence in AI's analytical capabilities and its potential to drive strategic decision-making. These disparities underscore the need for less-branded employers to build trust and capability in deploying AI for employer branding.

How do you expect artificial intelligence (AI) to influence employer branding in the next two years? Enable or provide:



HRRI Strategic Recommendations

Based on our research, we have the following suggestions.

- Engage in product research to determine which AI-powered tools can be used for brand measurement and analytics.
- Select the tools that best meet your organization's needs.
- Keep in mind that such tools have various possible applications, such as:
  - real-time monitoring of employee reviews, survey feedback, and social media data
  - predicting employee behavior and brand perception trends
  - processing large amounts of unstructured data, such as employee feedback and Glassdoor reviews
  - identifying actionable insights based on employee engagement and employee NPS scores
  - monitoring campaign effectiveness across social platforms
  - tracking competitors' digital presence and branding strategies
  - creating dashboards that integrate data from multiple sources
- Provide training on how AI can be used to support strategic branding initiatives.

Key Takeaways

Key Takeaway **1**

Demonstrate the value of employer branding to leadership. Employer branding can enhance key HR areas such as talent attraction, retention, and DEIB. However, leadership won't buy into employer branding practices without proof of return on investment to back it up. To demonstrate the tangible benefits, present quantifiable metrics that showcase the impact of a strong employer brand.

Key Takeaway **2**

Ensure that the organization brand, the employer brand, and key strategic initiatives all support one another. This requires teamwork and planning. HR should be deeply involved in developing and maintaining the employer brand. Marketing can also be involved, but, in our opinion, it should not be solely responsible for developing the employer brand. Marketers will tend to be more interested in burnishing the consumer brand and overall reputation, while HR will be more interested in an employer brand that supports key goals such as recruitment, retention, and engagement.

Key Takeaway **3**

Take advantage of employee referrals and testimonials. Current employees often have a good idea of whether one of their friends or acquaintances would make a good job candidate. Take advantage of their referrals, and use employee Net Promoter Scores to track the degree to which they would refer others to their organizations. Also, consider using employee testimonials to improve the organization's brand. If done well, these can go a long way in attracting excellent job candidates.

Key Takeaway **4**

Leverage industry networks. Seventy-five percent of organizations report difficulty finding talent globally. To beat the talent shortages and hire talent, organizations must look beyond traditional job ads. Maintaining a presence at industry events, professional associations, and specialized job boards will allow organizations to better attract talent that embodies their employer brand.

Key Takeaway **5**

Prioritize DEIB in your branding efforts. Our study found well-branded organizations are nearly three times as likely to say their brand enhances DEIB. Use inclusive language in job ads to attract diverse talent and align branding messages with inclusive organizational values to ensure all employees and qualified candidates feel included.

Key Takeaway **6**

Don't over-rely on the consumer brand. Having a well-known quality product or service is one thing, but it's a whole other to attract and retain talent. Consider what makes your company an ideal workplace and invest in your culture. This involves creating an inclusive and supportive environment where employees feel valued and engaged. Focus on professional development opportunities, work-life balance, and employee recognition programs that promote a sense of belonging. Additionally, gather feedback from employees and candidates to understand their needs and aspirations, and actively incorporate their suggestions into your workplace practices.

Key Takeaway **7**

Benchmark against competitors. Research what competitors in your industry are doing in the area of employer branding. Use external sources, surveys, and analytics to determine the perception of your organization compared to others in the space. Consider creating a branding map to identify where your organization sits in comparison to other organizations along various criteria.

Key Takeaway **8**

Ensure your branding team has sufficient resources. Organizations have many competing priorities, but—given the significant influence of employer branding on other strategic objectives—it's often wise to invest in the employer brand. To maximize its effectiveness, organizations should approach this thoughtfully by developing a phased investment plan that aligns with broader organizational goals.

Key Takeaway **9**

Use social media wisely and well. Social media can be a great way to communicate an organization's employer brand to potential candidates. Showcase your company culture with authentic "day-in-the-life" videos and employee testimonials. Engage your audience by responding to comments and encouraging employees to share their experiences. Leverage user-generated content through branded hashtags and utilize features like Instagram Stories or LinkedIn Articles. Analyze metrics regularly to refine your strategy and attract top talent in a competitive job market.

Key Takeaway **10**

Be on the lookout for AI-powered employer branding opportunities in 2025. AI in recruitment is evolving quickly, with new tools emerging and existing platforms gaining advanced capabilities. Our respondents expect AI to influence employer branding in various ways. That said, it's important to approach these tools thoughtfully. AI systems can sometimes reflect biases in their training data, potentially excluding certain demographic groups, narrowing the candidate pool, and exposing companies to claims of discrimination.

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