

# MONSTER

## Evolve your Employer Brand as your Company Grows



**By: Elaine Pofeldt**

It's not easy to recruit top talent if you run a small or midsize company. But there's one area where even the tiniest firm can shine: by developing a great [employer brand](#).

What is employer branding?

Your [employment brand](#) is the perception by current and potential employees of what it's like to work for your firm.

"An employer brand is the experience people will have when working with you," says industrial and organizational psychologist Steven Lindner, executive partner and officer of [The WorkPlace](#)

[Group](#), a provider of outsourced and strategic recruiting solutions based in the New York City area.

With many companies dealing with talent shortages, leaders are taking their employer branding seriously. It starts with clarifying your company's unique values. These tips will get you started.

Get clear on your employer brand. "The challenge with [employment branding](#) is many employers aren't sure what their employer brand is," says Lindner. That's especially true in small and very young companies, where the employer brand is still taking shape.

To identify what is different about your company's [employer brand](#), go straight to your employees. They may appreciate aspects of your company that you don't realize are special. For instance, they may love that you're receptive when they volunteer for a new initiative or providing them with a paid day every year to volunteer for a local charity. They may value that you have a formal process in place to review their suggestions.

Your employees can also alert you to gaps between your perception of the brand and theirs. For instance, you may think you're running a family-friendly company because you offer paid maternity leave. But if your managers raise an eyebrow when employees ask to telecommute when a child is sick, team members may see your employer brand very differently.

If you uncover a disconnect in your employment branding, you will likely need to coach your [leadership team](#) to make sure your managers are practicing these core values, says Lindner.



One of the best ways to get employees' input is using a tool like SurveyMonkey, suggests [Kim Shepherd](#), the Laguna Beach-based CEO of recruiting firm [Decision Toolbox](#), a 20-year-old company with 112 employees, all of whom work virtually.

[Shepherd](#) is co-author of the book [Get Scrappy: Business Insights to Make Your Company More Agile](#). "Ask what is good about your culture, what is bad," suggests [Shepherd](#). According to Lindner, an [employee survey](#) doesn't have to be anonymous.

Let your employees tell the story. Whether your employees rave about their [work environment](#) or share pictures of your company's bowling outing on Facebook, your team can be the most powerful [employee brand advocates](#).

"Getting individuals on your team to talk about what it is like to work for the organization -- to tell stories that are very personalized and accurate -- is a great way to get your employment brand out," says Lindner.

As video marketing firm [Viral Marketing](#) grew from 25 to 55 employees in 2015, co-founder Frank Klesitz hunted for self-motivated people who would thrive in an autonomous environment where they are free to work from the office, a coffee shop or at home.

One way he has highlighted this aspect of his employer brand is through the firm's "[Employee Spotlight](#)," where his general manager interviews team members in Google Hangouts videos about why they work at the company. "We know who is really excited about work," says Klesitz.

Visuals can help. Decision Toolbox's [Shepherd](#) includes images on her company's career page, including employee comments from a "virtual water cooler," as well as an online breakout room where employees share pictures of themselves dressed up for the company's ugly sweater contest. "People can get a sense of our playfulness," says [Shepherd](#).

Weave your employer brand into the recruiting process. Mention your brand in everything from your job postings to conversations with candidates about your value proposition, advises Lindner.

Marc Prosser is the co-founder and managing partner of 11-employee [Fit Small Business](#), a site in New York City that provides product and service reviews for small business owners.

Prosser wants to make sure the employees he hires today will stay with the company as they start families, so he offers health care and a retirement plan, even though this is unusual for a very small digital firm like his, where the employees are young. "If you are offering a retirement plan, you're sending a message that you are interested in people being with you for the long run," says Prosser.

To emphasize this aspect of his employer brand, Prosser mentions those benefits in every job ad that his company posts. He also makes mentions these benefits in conversations with potential hires.

At two-year-old [Perfect Touch Home Care](#), a firm in Elizabeth, NJ with three full-time office staffers and 25 caregivers, mentorship is part of the employer brand.

Co-owner and manager Mildrene Volcy and her colleagues accompany new hires on their initial visit to a customer's home, so they feel confident they know how to deliver excellent care. "We teach you how we treat our clients," says Volcy. "We lead by example."

During the pre-interview and [interview process](#), Volcy isn't shy about telling candidates about this value with job candidates. It goes a long way toward attracting employees who truly care about delivering the best possible service to her customers -- and makes the work of recruiting easier. "We've become very selective," says Volcy.