

Employer Brand Research 2017

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employer branding:
creating a memorable
candidate experience



Frank Ribuot

Employer branding isn't just about a new logo or recruitment campaign – it's about people and behaviours.

Creating a strong employer brand and employee value proposition (EVP) is crucial in attracting, engaging and appointing the best talent for your organisation. To do this we need to look at both external and internal perceptions to create tangible outcomes. A crucial one being the candidate experience – is it a positive or negative experience and how can the experience affect your brand?

Developing, investing in and acting on positive and memorable candidate experiences should be a priority for all business leaders and companies. Candidates and employees play a crucial and powerful role as 'brand ambassadors' on the journey of creating an attractive employer brand.

The annual Randstad Employer Brand Research measures the perceived attractiveness of Australia's top 150 companies and what potential candidates look for in a new employer. It allows us to pinpoint gaps and identify opportunities to allow companies to develop employer brand and talent strategies which ultimately will attract the most appealing candidates to an organisation.

It is with this comprehensive research analysis that we work with organisations to identify, develop and deliver a positive candidate experience.

Frank Ribuot

CEO

Randstad Australia and New Zealand

employer brand and the candidate experience

The candidate experience is increasingly pivotal to job seekers and potential employees considering a role within an organisation. Once an afterthought, this journey is now regarded as a crucial element of an employer brand strategy.

Each step along the candidate's journey should be authentic, reinforce the employer's culture and provide transparency into how employees are valued within an organisation.

Employer brand touches the entire candidate lifecycle, from candidate attraction to engagement, onboarding and employee retention.

When it comes to employer brand-building, today's organisations face many challenges. A convergence of internal and external issues can bewilder even the most astute HR leaders.

Information about employers is now readily available online. The power of peer reviews on sites such as LinkedIn and Glassdoor can have a disproportionate impact on reputation. And the struggle to justify investments in employer branding is eternal.

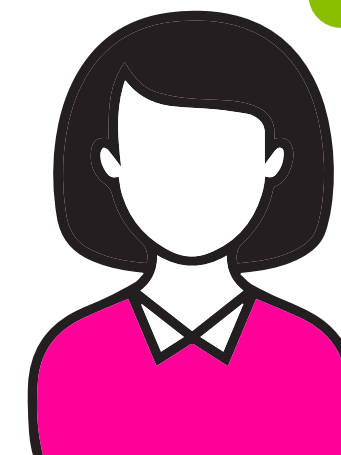
Employers who remain laser-focused on their employer brand will most likely succeed in providing a positive candidate experience, be viewed as an employer of choice and, ultimately hire the most engaged and qualified candidates.

These companies prioritise the needs of job seekers and potential employees, knowing that every person who comes in contact with their corporate and employer brand is a potential customer, employee or partner later on. As a result, their approach creates the most positive candidate experience, which has a long-lasting impact on their attractiveness as an employer. Both successful and unsuccessful candidates come through the candidate process with a good impression that may bolster their role as a brand ambassador.

Developing a positive candidate experience requires a high level of involvement and a comprehensive view of the entire journey. The candidate experience is a journey with steps that customers and partners will never encounter. As such, companies need to consider the unique needs of the talent they seek.

Human resource leaders are aware of the challenges they have in providing a positive experience for potential employees. According to LinkedIn's Corporate Recruiting Trends 2017 report, 30% say if budgets were unlimited, they would invest more in improving the candidate experience. More than half say they would spend more on employer branding, recognising the impact it has on the ability to acquire quality talent.

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understand what employees want

Understanding what employees want is crucial when attracting and engaging the best talent for your organisation.

Having a high employer brand awareness means that your company is widely known. But being a highly attractive employer means that people would like to work for your company.

The 2017 Randstad Employer Brand Research identified a gap between what employees seek and what employers offer.

Australian employees are attracted to companies that encourage work-life balance, job security and offer a pleasant work atmosphere. The research showed that companies are focused on other aspects, in particular, falling short on prioritising work-life balance and a pleasant work atmosphere.

Employees in Australia seek



Employers in Australia offer



Developing an employer brand improvement matrix allows companies to understand and prioritise where they need to invest to strengthen the attractiveness of their employer brand for both candidates and employees.



Career progression
Westpac



Environmentally and socially aware
Westpac



Financial health
Commonwealth Bank



Good reputation
Bendigo and Adelaide Bank



Latest technology
ASX



Good work-life balance
Flexigroup



Job security
Commonwealth Bank



Stimulating and challenging work
ASX



Pleasant working atmosphere
Bendigo and Adelaide Bank

Improvements in your employer brand are critical for your EVP. Improved performance can contribute strongly to improving the strength of your employer brand, whereas a weaker performance can have a negative effect on the strength of your employer brand.

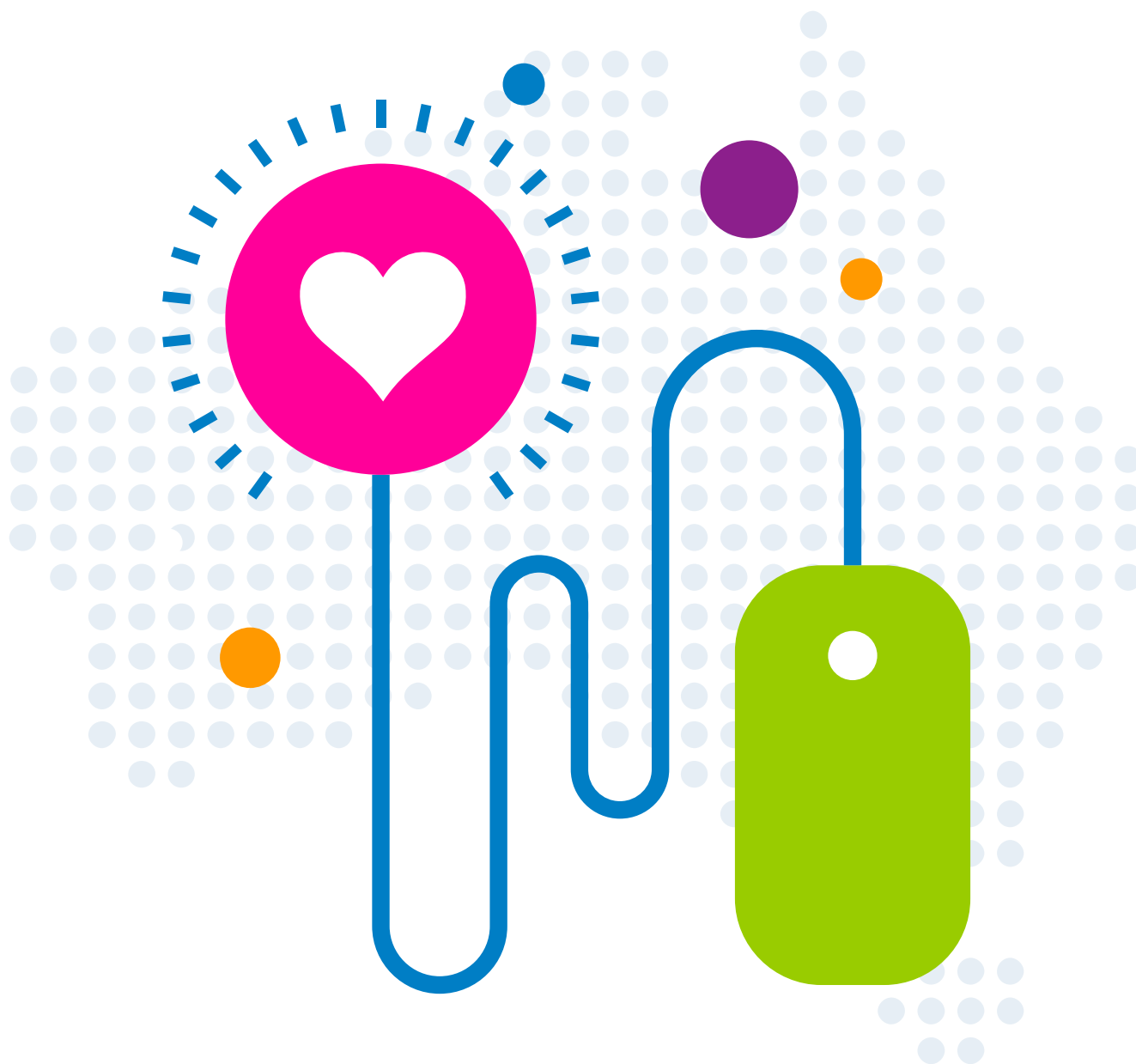
the candidate experience

To understand candidate experience best practices and how to create a positive journey, begin by defining the journey. This starts before the candidate even enters the recruitment process and ends at the point of employment.

Mapping the journey helps to identify the moments of truth that require particular attention that leave a lasting impression of the organisation.

Many organisations believe the candidate experience starts when applicants enter the process, view postings and register with applicant tracking systems. However, starting here ignores the entire attracting and sourcing component of the recruitment process. In fact, passive and active candidates may interact with potential employers long before they even consider a career there.

Employers who seek to create maximum awareness and provide the best experience should consider investing in pre-engagement activities – this may involve leveraging the corporate brand to attract talent.



creating a positive candidate experience

an engaging and user friendly career site

Developing a genuine and persuasive career site remains the most effective way for engaging talent. With such a broad reach, career sites are the ultimate starting point for job seekers and should provide a positive impression of the organisation. Having an engaging career site with compelling messaging and user-friendly navigation should be a priority for companies interested in converting job seekers and potential employees to applicants.

It is critical that companies clearly and genuinely communicate their mission, values, culture and existing employees on the site. Furthermore, it is important to provide an authentic insight into employee benefits, development opportunities, corporate citizenship, employee testimonials, diversity, awards/accolades or location highlights.

Another priority of career sites is facilitating fact-finding and job applications, which means they should be as user friendly as possible. This requires optimisation for mobile devices as applicants increasingly turn to their devices when applying for positions.

At the same time, use of employee testimonial and photos/videos featuring employees are powerful resources that resonate with job seekers.

compelling job postings

Job postings should have compelling messaging, consistent formatting and be written in a manner to intrigue and sell a job seeker on the organisation. Ideally they should have a solid, well-written and compelling opening to generate interest, body copy that shows unique selling points and a call to action.

It is no longer enough to just describe a company, job seekers want more information in job descriptions. Candidates want to know about salary, total benefits package, work-from-home or flexible work options, team structure and the work environment.

a candidate experience survey

One gap many career portals suffer is creating a two-way dialogue. Most visitors conduct research and submit resumes, but that doesn't mean employers can't ask for their input.

A candidate experience survey not only empowers HR to continuously improve and enhance the talent acquisition process, it also leaves the applicant feeling valued.

Another perpetual criticism of applicants is that the application process often leaves them in the dark and voiceless, but a well-designed site can mitigate this common problem. This can be achieved by adding Live Chats, FAQs, establishing a candidate experience charter, outlining the hiring process and gathering feedback.



external influences

The ability to control content is critical to brand building and creating a memorable candidate experience. But what happens when a company's reputation hinges on external influencers? Increasingly, workers turn to a wide variety of sources to learn more about a potential employer, and many of these are independent opinions that are crowd-sourced.

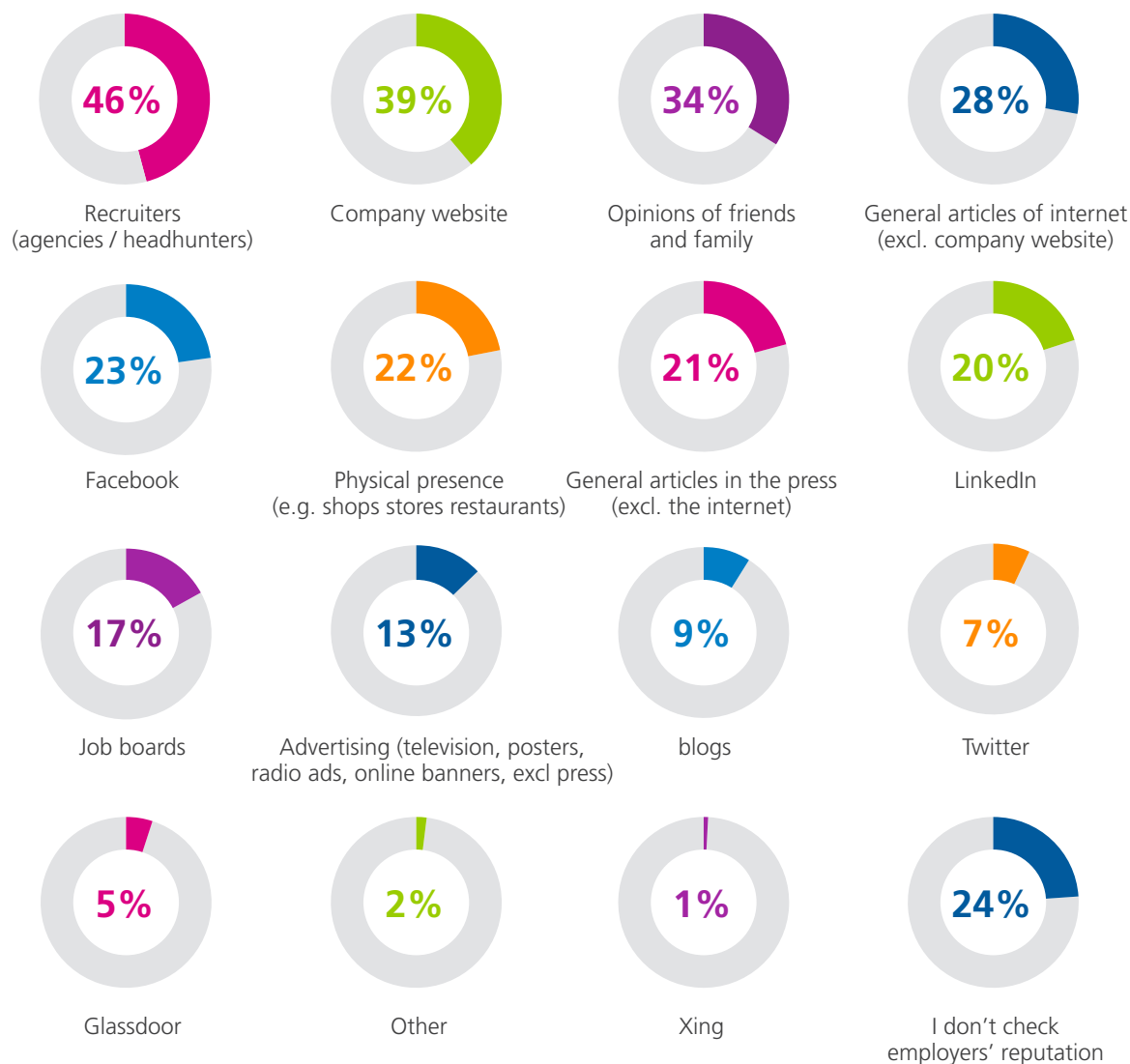
The Randstad Employer Brand Research identified that Australians evaluate the reputation of potential employers through various channels. Recruitment agencies, websites and opinions of friends and family came out on top – 46% of people's opinion are influenced by recruiters, 39% by websites and 34% by friends and family.

create the best impression

How can companies create the best impression in the age of transparency?

Getting personal is a good start. Positive or negative, reviews left by current and former employees provide an opportunity for employers to emphasize positive comments and diffuse negative ones. The challenge is dedicating resources to monitor and reply to reviews. It's difficult to cover all channels, but the major ones require attention if a company is serious about its employer brand.

Channels used to evaluate reputation of possible employers



prioritise employee review sites

Surprisingly, many organisations don't prioritise employee review sites, such as Glassdoor, as an important component in their overall awareness strategy. This is a big miss. Job seekers typically start with a search engine, which often shows review site results within the first page. Therefore it is critical for organisations to place value and resources toward monitoring review sites and keeping their profile content relevant to their audience.

the power of employees

Leverage the power of your employees: testimonials, photos, videos or blogs are strong options to provide authentic insights for the savvy, sophisticated job seekers of today. Using real stories from real employees helps to provide trusted and transparent viewpoints about what it is like to work at an organisation.

Hearing how an employee feels about working for an employer carries significantly more weight than a polished corporate video. Companies that make an effort showcasing their workforce are more relatable to candidates and therefore come across as more authentic.

reaching multiple channels

Review sites garner much attention, but often workers begin their research elsewhere. These include professional and social networks, alumni groups, professional associations, talent and recruitment communities and social networks. Companies struggling with hard-to-find skills should choose a few select portals to reach their target talent.

social networks

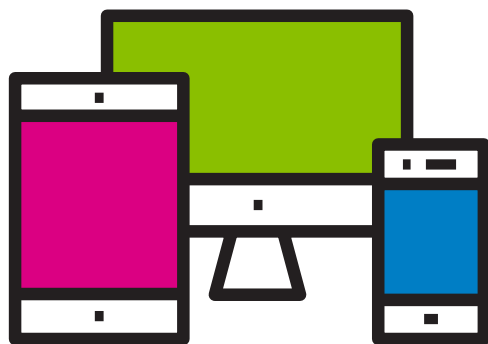
Big social networks are always an option for talent leaders to attract and source candidates, but companies can expect too much from social platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, as recruitment tools.

Even so, social media can be an important tool for talent attraction. The challenge is that most companies aren't leveraging channels such as Facebook or LinkedIn effectively, often failing to share content or monitor dialogue about what's being said about them. For many, even small tactical steps such as linking career sites, organising videos on a dedicated YouTube Careers playlist or adding careers-related messaging to a company overview are not part of their process.

Complementing social media are alumni groups. These groups are a low-cost channel for employers because their constituents are already familiar with and have a positive view of the company.



As applicants move into the recruitment process to be screened, companies increasingly rely on technology to pare down the field



transparent and communicative process

Pre-engagement is an important part of the candidate experience because it may be the first time an applicant has contact with an employer, but once she or he comes into the application process, employers should ensure a transparent and communicative process the rest of the way.

From the application onwards that perception becomes reality. As the candidate moves through screening, interviewing and appointment each step is another potential opportunity to impress or discourage talent. Organisations that set expectations about the hiring process, provide resume or interview tips, give white-glove service while scheduling interviews and communicate with candidates throughout the selection process will see positive outcomes.

Creating a positive experience for internal candidates will support retention and engagement and help HR further enhance the journey for all. Organisations often forget to solicit the feedback of existing employees seeking to move up, but they can provide unique perspectives in the context of knowing the organisation. Also, providing training, resources and guidelines to your employees will help them become strong brand advocates.

monitor results

Employers have been doing a better job of providing the transparency candidates expect over recent years.

The application process is often the first big barrier prospective employees encounter, so companies should undertake continuous monitoring of results. Using analytics enables talent leaders to see at which point applicants most often drop off from the process. Also HR should periodically conduct anonymous audits of the process to experience it firsthand. If surveying the actual candidates isn't possible, these steps may help identify impediments.

effective screening

As applicants move into the recruitment process to be screened, companies increasingly rely on technology to pare down the field. While this has improved efficiencies and accelerated processing, it also has become less personalised and more automated. This stage can be perplexing because assessment may not test for specific skills; rather, it may be focused on aptitude and cultural fit. Helping candidates understand why some questions are asked improves the experience.

Additionally, the screening stage at many organisations offers the least amount of communication in the entire recruitment process.

open communication

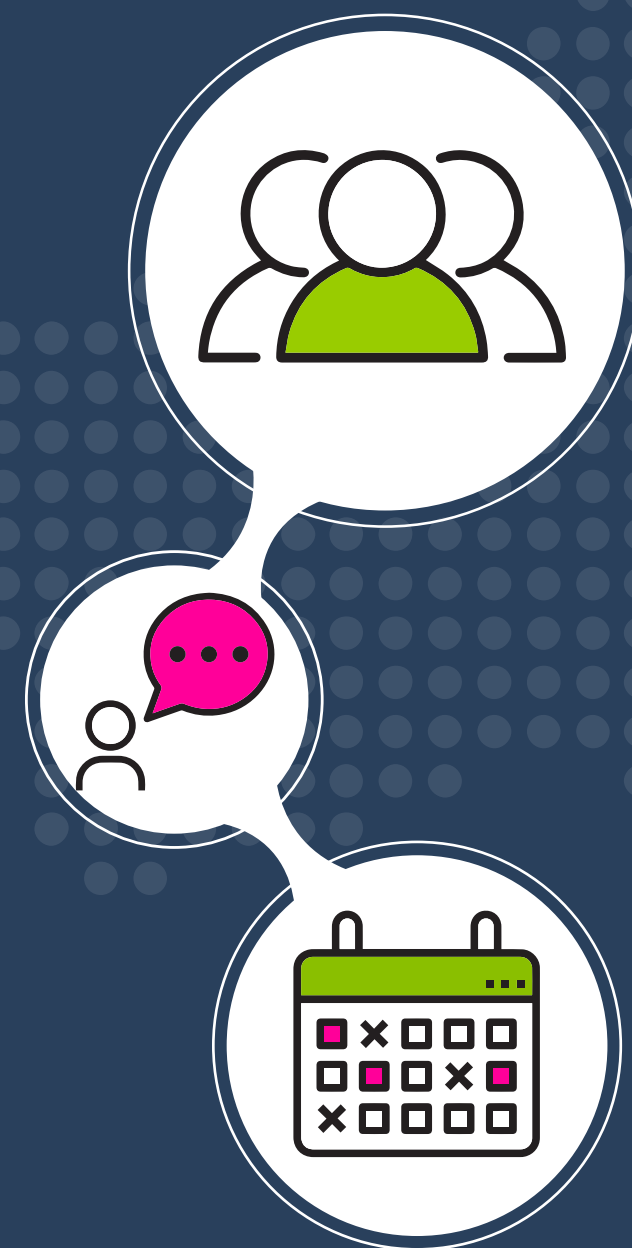
For candidates who move on to the interview and select stages, many say employers don't do enough to help them get ready for phone, video or in-person interviews. Communication about what to expect and how to prepare should be a standard part of the process but is lacking at many organisations. Providing an agenda, information about the interviewers, a chance to provide feedback and a timeframe for the decision-making process are important details that instill confidence in a candidate and affirms their decision to pursue a career with the prospective employer. This assurance carries forward for successful hires, resulting in greater engagement in the workplace.

Unsuccessful applicants should be treated equally well with personalised notification. Employers need not share details about the decision-making, but it's important they share the results according to the timeframe promised or implied. Even when the news is bad, how a company communicates it can make a significant difference in creating a positive journey, and what the candidate decides to share about their experience on social media. What's important is ensuring applicants are regularly contacted, made to feel respected for their submission and asked for feedback. Without input, employers don't know if they are creating an army of disgruntled individuals or sympathetic supporters.

For those who are offered a position, maintaining consistent and personal communication helps to ensure engagement and excitement before commencement. Clarity is absolutely critical to ensure the potential employee understands what's being offered on the table, the timeframe for acceptance and whether additional discussions or negotiations may be necessary. Candidates should be excited about the new opportunity and not feel pressured or uncertain about the role or the company. Setting realistic expectations and being honest about the role, team, culture and organisation will ensure a better job fit, improve quality of hire and positively impact retention rates.

appointment

From candidate to employee, the appointment step is the last, but not least, important part of the journey. This too, will have an impact on retention and engagement. An effective hiring and onboarding process means providing all the resources they need to accelerate induction enabling them to become productive as soon as possible. It's also an opportunity to capture the holistic view of new hires about the candidate experience. Not only will the appointment process affect employee performance but also his or her enthusiasm to serve as an ambassador for the employer brand in the future.





The **150** largest employers per country are selected, each with at least **1,000** employees. In Australia, **7,795** respondents formed the representative sample to measure attractiveness of **150** companies based in the country.

why does a positive candidate experience matter

Even as organisations face growing talent scarcity, job seekers are investing more time researching potential employers. For these companies, ensuring each applicant – successful or otherwise – has a positive and memorable candidate experience should be a priority because they can have a significant impact on their employer brand. As potential customers, they could also affect business in the future. So, for a variety of reasons, the investment in delivering a positive and memorable journey for candidates is well worth the effort.

randstad employer brand research

Randstad Employer Brand Research gives unique insights into the key drivers of talent attraction within Australia and across the world. Conducted by independent research agency TNS, the research program covers 26 countries.

The Randstad Employer Brand Research is based on the perceived attractiveness of companies in a specific market. The 150 largest employers per country are selected, each with at least 1,000 employees. In Australia, 7,795 respondents formed the representative sample to measure attractiveness of 150 companies based in the country. Samples are based on national demographics (age, region, gender, education level) with a slight emphasis on respondents aged below 40, with potential workers being the target audience of the survey. Each sample

is comprised of a diverse age, region and gender population. Students and both employed and unemployed workers between 18 and 65 years of age are also represented.

To request the 2017 Randstad Employer Brand Research report visit: <https://www.randstad.com.au/employer-brand-research/>

randstad australia

Randstad is a Fortune 500 company and world leading recruitment & HR solutions provider. Representing more than 90% of the global HR services market, we have a mission of ‘shaping the world of work’, and are passionate about matching people with companies that will develop their potential and matching companies with people that will drive business performance and opportunity.

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