

## How a great employee referral program can help you promote your employer brand

It's no secret: Employee referral programs can greatly help your organization find and hire top talent. After all, where best to find potential new employees than by tapping into current workers, who share your firm's values and who are already helping you run a successful business? "Employee referral programs can be an effective way to hire talented people, and they can also be invaluable in the current talent acquisition environment, in which open jobs outnumber qualified candidates," [according to SHRM](#). However, securing talent through a strong employee referral program doesn't just help you hire strong new employees. It can also be a powerful tool to help you promote your employer brand.



I recently conducted a straw poll of several industry companies including Reps, Distributors and Manufacturers asking if they have an employee referral program in place. I also asked if they did have a program, if there was a reward attached to it. Roughly 60% of those I spoke with do indeed have an employee referral program and all had monetary rewards tied to a successful referral, generally after the new employee had been on board for a given length of time.

What does an effective employee program entail and how can you start one at your company? SHRM notes there are a number of things you can do, including:

- 1. Give employees the tools they need to refer:** This can mean putting together a positive culture around employee referrals and being able to track these efficiently in an HR portal so that you can effectively review the entire referral workflow.
- 2. Set expectations and guidelines:** Additionally, SHRM recommends that you should "make sure employees understand the referral program's guidelines and expectations, including who is eligible to participate in the program and receive rewards for referrals."
- 3. Provide incentives:** To help boost employee support in referring all-star talent, you should ideally put into place monetary inducements (if someone gets hired and stays for a set period of time). Make sure these incentives are paid in a predictable, timely and public manner and. To facilitate this, HR staff should set up automated payments in their HR information system.

Other guidelines to follow include holding leaders accountable and being transparent throughout the process with employees, providing feedback, and, importantly, marketing the program far and wide. This last guideline means investing in the marketing and communication plans to boost how many employees at your organization actually participate.

This is extremely important when trying to promote your employer brand. But, how is the term defined? [According to SHRM](#), employer branding "is an important part of the employee value proposition and is essentially what the organization communicates as its identity to both potential and current employees."

Moreover, it includes many things about the company, including the "organization's mission, values, culture and personality," according

to SHRM. "A positive employer brand communicates that the organization is a good employer and a great place to work." Notably, the article also states that an employer brand greatly affects the "recruitment of new employees, retention and engagement of current employees, and the overall perception of the organization in the market."

So, what are the specific ways referral programs can help?

First, a strong referral program, as noted above, includes clear expectations, guidelines and a powerful marketing plan of action. As a result of this communications push, employees will know in-depth how to speak with former co-workers and friends who they want to refer. This strong professionalism instantly makes your company look like a worthy organization and one that many will want to join because of this, leading to increased interest.

Second, your company should be investing heavily in communications and online content in order to promote your employer brand on your website, social media platforms, public relations and through other promotional materials. As a result, people will covet the chance to be referred and interviewed because they'll know even more about the company.

An employee referral program is a win-win situation for you and your organization. You'll create both a powerful commitment to hiring the best people as well as an employer brand that truly shines..