

Why Should I Work for Your Company?

Examine your corporate culture, rewards, career paths, and corporate citizenship

By Howard Adamsky and Danielle Monaghan

Well, why should I?

That seems like a fair question considering the fact that great candidates can have multiple opportunities just within one organization and several offers from competing organizations.

Today's candidates are very often willing to forego a top title for a great career path, flexible work schedule, performance-based rewards, and/or meaningful work. (Which of the four does your company provide?)

With this reality quickly becoming the modus operandi of top-tier job seekers, the important questions that support your ability to hire great candidates now become clear:

- Has your organization evolved to meet their needs, or is it business as usual?
- Do you have a compelling employee-value proposition covering all the facets that will attract and retain employees?
- Can you articulate this consistently to all candidates?
- Can you determine what is most compelling to each candidate they decide to pursue?

Let's start with a quick definition: A value proposition is the sum total of people initiatives, standards, and programs that support business goals. A strong value proposition differentiates one company from another and the great companies from the mediocre ones.

With this in mind, if you want to have the best candidates buy what you are selling (in other words, accept your offer over the offers of competing companies), the value proposition needs to be strong enough to make the sale.

Consider the following:

- **Corporate Culture and Values:** What makes your company unique, and what do the people in the company care about? What do prospective employees think about your company? What comes to mind for them and what is attractive to A-players? Is it the casual dress code or the professional environment? Is it the fact that all employees have offices or the openness of a cubicle environment? Is it the communication style or the decision-making style? Is it the type of people with whom they work: smart, fun-loving, intellectual, family-oriented? How do employees have fun at work? How are decisions made, and how do employees work as a team? What about access to leadership and the ability to suggest the unpopular? All of these and more are critically important to the overall oneness that makes up your company.
- **Corporate Citizenship:** How does your company contribute to the greater good of your community? This aspect has become increasingly important to A-players, especially those of the youngest generations. It is not all about work anymore — they want to feel they are making an impact on the community. So what are you doing to make the changes that will appeal to those who genuinely care about the world around them? One well-known organization we know gives four hours off each week to do community or volunteer work with full pay. Are you doing your part to make this a better world? By doing so, you will also be doing your part to craft a better company and a stronger value proposition.

- Rewards and Retention: Are your rewards based on performance or seniority? A-players want to know they are eligible for differentiated rewards based upon their performances and contributions. In addition to monetary rewards, A-players want good benefits that meet their needs as opposed to the same things you've been doing forever. For example, offering adoption benefits in a 20-something workforce is probably not going to resonate, but bringing your dog to work might. What about the ability to work on interesting projects, aggressive career growth, real recognition for a job well-done, and a genuine effort to create a meritocracy that feels like one as opposed to promotions based upon seniority?
- Growth and Career Runway: What opportunities for growth exist, both vertically and horizontally? By horizontally we mean this: Can a strong individual contributor become more influential in a company without becoming a manager? How clear is it to employees what they can do to move up or become more influential within the firm? Can people move up as easily within the organization, or (as is usually the case) is the best way to get a promotion, more money, and a higher title to quit and take a new job?

You must understand that these questions make up the very foundation of how successful you'll be in hiring the best candidates and, to a great degree, how successful your company will be at attracting and retaining top talent.

Remember that the key concept here for the future thinkers among you is value — the value proposition your organization brings to the candidate's overall existence, lifestyle, and needs, as opposed to the outdated notion of simply offering them a job — because time put in for a paycheck is simply not what it's all about anymore.

Employees do two things at companies: They come and they go. Those pivotal events can become the most significant actions in not just their lives but the lives of the companies they impact. (Steve Jobs left Apple, and the company was in a free fall. Steve Jobs came back, and look at Apple today. Get the point?)

Who comes, who goes, and the reasons why candidates come and go can be the primary recruiting markers that separate the great companies from all of the rest. A good deal of this movement depends on the value proposition your organization has to offer. Make it a valuable one, and impressive things can happen that will change the course of where your company is positioned, how profitable it can be, its perception in the marketplace, and how quickly it can leapfrog as it invents the next great whatever.

Fail to do so, and you will be playing the same tired game: losing great employees to companies that are differentiated from you by the fact that they have a great value proposition and you simply do not.

Howard Adamsky is the founder and president of HR Innovators, Inc. Danielle Monaghan is staffing director with Microsoft Corporation.