Create Your Company's Authentic Story

A How-to Guide for Employer Branding Teams

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TALENT

Introduction

In our Flow State 2022 panel "Tackling the War for Technical Talent," the first topic that came up, from speaker Maggie Hulce, was why – despite layoffs and hiring freezes – is it so hard to find and hire technical talent.

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> Jobs in technical roles are up almost 50% this year, year to date. But the job seekers are engaging with those jobs at only half that rate.
>
> **Maggie Hulce**
> Executive VP and GM, Job Seeker, **Indeed**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that by 2026, the shortage of engineers in the US will exceed 1.2M. As machine learning technologies rapidly grow and organizations increase their cloud workloads, the IT talent shortage keeps increasing – despite news of layoffs and restructuring in the sector. Additionally, overall employment of software developers, quality assurance analysts, and software testers is projected to grow 25 percent from 2021 to 2031, much faster than the average for all occupations. About 162,900 openings across those technical fields are projected each year, on average, over the decade. Technology isn't slowing down, and neither will the demand for technologists to build it.

In every economy, employer branding and storytelling remains an effective way to engage and build relationships with candidates for hard-to-fill positions like software developers and engineers. Your brand matters to technical talent and to your current engineering teams. This guide will take you through how to create and communicate your company's authentic story with tangible steps, takeaways, and examples of what employer branding looks like when executed well.

Where to Begin: Know Your Employer Brand Messaging

It starts with one story, and builds to a constellation of stories told from your employees' point of view through testimonials, blogs, videos, instructional content, and recruitment marketing assets. Employer brand storytelling focuses on what makes a company unique. By telling your authentic story and creating content aligned to what your company and team members value, you can give tech talent what they want - an inside peek into what it's like to work at your organization from those they trust, other developers.

Stack Overflow knows developers.
Learn more about how developers think about their careers here.

Everything your company puts out into the world is part of your brand – the one that both consumers and candidates see. Your employee value proposition (EVP) is a component of your brand that outlines the unique set of benefits an employee receives in return for the skills, capabilities, and experience they bring to a company. An employer brand is about defining the essence of your company—how it is unique and what it stands for. An EVP is the deal struck between company and employee in return for their contribution and performance.

Your EVP is also the most organic place to begin your employer brand story. Think about what your current developers love the most about working for your company. Is it your corporate social

responsibility efforts and what you contribute to the tech community? Your diversity initiatives? Your health benefits, paid time off, flexible scheduling, internal mobility, or learning & development?

Brainstorm Ideas for Content

The key components of your EVP, such as benefits, culture, work-life balance, and career growth opportunities are essential to telling your company and employees' story through different forms of storytelling.

Content is most effective when your own talent speaks for you. During the Flow State 2022 panel, Maggie Hulce, Executive VP and GM of Enterprise at Indeed, spoke about their approach to content creation for technical talent.

> Do you have employer branding content that was designed to speak to technical talent? You know, it sort of comes up like, I want to attract veterans. Great. Do you have any content that speaks specifically *to* veterans? And does it feel like it was tailored to that audience? Step one is have you taken the time to think about, what is our value proposition for technical talent? How is it different from other roles in our organization, bringing people in your company who can tell that story, candidly and authentically, that are in the technical organization, speaking on behalf of it, and then let it shine and let it be specifically for that audience.

A short list of storytelling content ideas:

- Celebrating and recognizing your engineers' work
- Ways the company helps the community or social good (corporate social responsibility)
- Day in the life videos directly from developers at your company
- Stories that share how your company has impacted employees' tech career trajectory
- Articles about benefits and perks your team members are most passionate about
- Highlight innovative products your engineers developed
- Employee testimonials. Take a look at The Employer Brand Guide to Creating Employee Testimonials for some ideas on how to bring your developers' experiences to life through their own stories.

Choose Creative Channels to Share Your Story

There are so many platforms, from your own company career site to social channels, it can be overwhelming. Start by researching platforms and communities where your specific ideal tech talent spends their time.

Social Media

If your target candidate audience is younger tech talent, or maybe even recent grads, social media has the ability to reach and engage that audience faster than ever before. The growth and popularity of platforms like TikTok have given companies a new way to get their message in front of hundreds of thousands of potential future candidates. You can create and post employee videos – or, like some companies are now doing, hire influencers who already have the following you want to reach.

A recent CNBC article tells the story of one influencer: Emily Durhan, a content creator with over 200,000 followers on TikTok who is also a senior recruiter for Intuit.


From CNBC:

> *Durham's following on the social platform and her success show how influencers and content creators on TikTok can strengthen a company's recruiting efforts. Her TikTok presence gives potential candidates familiarity and recognition that often leads them to apply and be interested in roles at Intuit.*

While TikTok is a newer social media platform and has a large audience, it's a given that you'll want to broadcast your content on tried and true social channels like LinkedIn, YouTube, and Twitter.

For example, when creating a storytelling employer brand campaign with multiple assets, consider each channel and how tech talent consumes content:

- **TikTok:** Tell your story through a short 30 second video by an influencer or on your company account speaking about easy access to learning & development opportunities.
- **YouTube:** Longer videos are great for YouTube and this is where you could post a developer "day in the life" video that talks about the tech stack your engineers use and what products they're excited to work on.
- **LinkedIn:** Share employee testimonials on how your company has positively impacted their tech career trajectory on your company's LinkedIn.
- **Twitter:** Share a recent hackathon or tech community event with pictures of your developers participating.

Because of the variety and type of content on each social networking site, the creative opportunities are limitless. However, if you're just getting started with your employer brand story, you'll want to focus on one or two channels in the beginning that you know your employees use on a regular basis – because you're likely to reach similar talent on those platforms and it keeps the process from becoming too overwhelming.
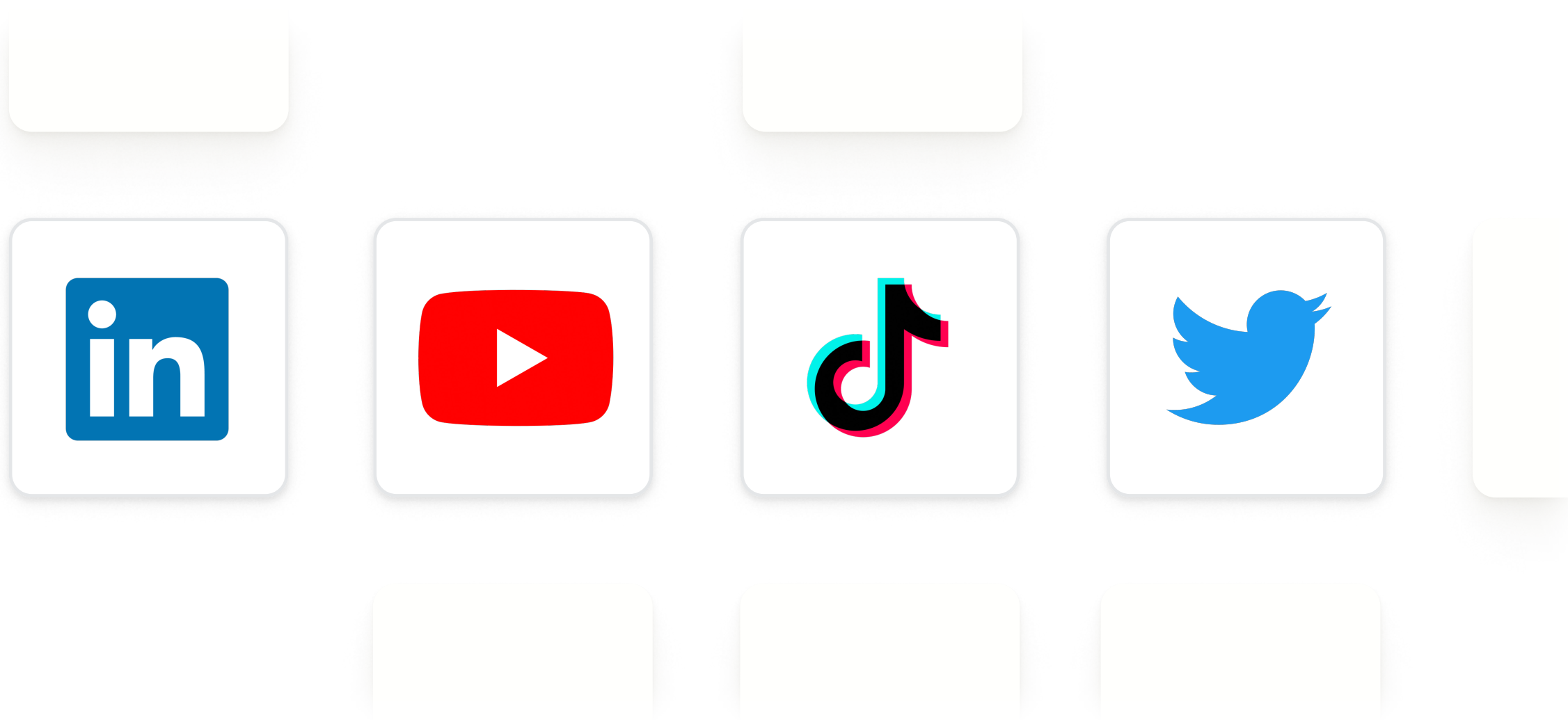
Company Blogs

In the technology space, we are seeing a resurgence of blogs from engineers and developers – experts posting on their company's sites which can give candidates more information on not only what it's like to work there, but what specific projects they are working on. Stack Overflow found that 48% of developers use these types of blogs and other company-owned media when researching possible employers.

During the Flow State 2022 panel we mentioned earlier, Sally Bolig, Global Head of Employer Branding at Etsy, explained how and why giving your engineers a voice can have a greater impact on innovation and showcase the passion they have for the work.

> At Etsy we have a blog called Code as Craft Blog, it is our public facing place where we say: Here are some risks we took, here were the outputs, here's where we completely failed, here's where we pivoted, here's how we proceeded. So we already have a group of engineers who are comfortable presenting these triumphs and failures, and that's embraced internally. So that's one group of people who we know we can always lean on is who are the people writing these pieces and sharing these pieces. They have something to say that is worth sharing that other people could benefit from. We lean on them in that way to make sure that we are choosing specifically in a way that is not biased and that's also celebrating the people in this unique way.

Company Pages

Technical talent is unique in that they have been using the internet to share information from the first coding languages in informal bulletin boards, to evolving communities like Stack Overflow. Claiming space within these communities is easy, and allows employers to showcase authentic stories in a way that directly engages the tech community, funneling them to specific resources on company career sites to learn more.

Company Pages on Stack Overflow are an example of how an employer brand story can be told with technical talent in mind. They are intuitive and allow employers to share company updates, perks and benefits, their tech stack, videos and photos of team members, and even highlight their own developers' projects. More than 100+ million technologists visit the Stack Overflow public platform every month, making it one of the most popular websites in the world, and where tech talent spend a lot of their time.

Employer branding content shouldn't be limited to a singular channel or content type. It should be as diverse as your workforce, as interesting as your developers and their own passion projects, and really give candidates an inside look into the unique culture your company offers. Above all, consistency matters because trust takes time to build credibility and influence, especially in the tech sector.

Want to see how other companies are using Company Pages to tell their authentic story on Stack Overflow? <u>Check them out here</u>.

Give User-Generated Content a Try

User generated content (UGC) is any type of content – images, videos, text, and audio – created by users and not by professional creators. "Users" for employer branding are your own team members – and even future candidates. This type of content is usually found on social media platforms, forums, blogs, and online communities, originating not from an organization, but from passionate people.

In the technology industry, user generated content can support thought leadership by showcasing the cutting-edge products, services, and technologies developed by your company, as well as your focus on continuous improvement. Additionally, UGC can provide insights into your company's dynamic and creative workplace culture, highlighting your commitment to learning & development or unique approach to problem-solving as a team. UGC can help technology companies to position themselves as employers of choice and can also help build a strong and engaged community of their current team members who become employee advocates.

Consider these statistics: <u>84 percent of millennials</u> report that user-generated content has some influence on what they buy and 86 percent of millennials say that user-generated content is generally a good indicator of the quality of a brand or service. Across all ages, <u>55 percent of consumers</u> trust UGC over other forms of marketing.

This type of content highlights the value of transparency. Like reviews on sites like Glassdoor or Indeed, UGC is unsolicited and almost forces a level of transparency that creates trust. Tech talent can get insight into what it's like to work at your company from someone other than you. Developers have many languages they use and learn over time, and UGC for employer branding is one of the loudest ways to communicate your authentic story.

It's important for your team to have a clear strategy for using UGC and to ensure that the content aligns with your company's overall brand image and messaging. There are several ways to leverage UGC, and these are just a few possibilities:

1. **Social Media Sharing:** Share tech or employee related user-generated content on your social media platforms, such as Twitter, LinkedIn, and Youtube. This can help increase reach and visibility among the developer audience.
2. **Employee Testimonials:** Use user-generated content in the form of employee (engineer) testimonials on your career site, recruitment materials, and even job descriptions.
3. **Employee Advocacy:** Encourage your broader IT and Engineering organizations to re-post user-generated content on social media and other channels. Employee advocacy can be a powerful way to spread the word about your company and build trust with tech talent.
4. **Content Marketing:** Use user-generated content to create engaging and informative blog posts, videos, and other content that highlights your company's culture, social responsibility efforts, and tech community involvement.
5. **Employee Recognition:** Recognize and reward employees who contribute content. This can help to foster a culture of engagement and encourage employees to continue sharing their experiences.

Note: It's important to be transparent with users about how content will be used and to obtain the necessary permissions from employees and other contributors before sharing their content.

Conclusion

Employer brand storytelling is a crucial component of attracting and retaining top tech talent. By knowing your message, choosing your channels, and crafting compelling content that showcases the unique value proposition of your company, you can differentiate yourself and stand out in a competitive talent market. Authentic messaging doesn't have to be overproduced; it just has to be meaningful in order to resonate with developers and technologists.

Primary Resource

Flow State 2022: Tackling the War for Technical Talent

Sally Bolig, Global Head of Employer Branding at Etsy, and Maggie Hulce, Executive VP and GM, Job Seeker, at Indeed, discuss how fostering a culture of learning at work and creating an engaging employer brand is crucial for retaining technical talent in a highly competitive hiring landscape in a conversation with Stack Overflow's Chief Marketing Officer Khalid El Khatib.

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Stack Overflow Employer Branding enables you to engage and market your employer brand to 100+ million self-motivated, proactive, passionate developers and technologists.

Find out how we can build a strategy that supports your tech talent recruiting and retention goals.

Talk to an expert   ▷